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Exploring the Transition from Classroom Teacher to Vice-Principal in Rural Schools

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Abstract

This research study investigates the experiences of classroom teachers who have transitioned into leadership roles as vice-principals in a rural school board in South-western Ontario. It looks specifically at personal and organizational factors that influenced their transition to a leadership position, as well as the paths that took them from the classroom to the vice-principal's office. This study examines thesetransitions in both elementary and secondary schools, specifically it explores how the teachers decided to make the transition into an administrative role, the challenges they face, and the duties within their new role. This study aims to document and develop awareness into how teachers experience the transition into the new vice-principal role. The research focuses on new vice-principals employed in one rural school board in South-western Ontario. Eight vice-principals, new to the role within the last two years,were interviewed using semi-structured. This research will be valuable to current vice-principals, teachers transitioning to a leadership role, and those considering a leadership position. Similarly, the conclusions of this study have the potential to inform the school board's recruitment and support initiatives for aspiring leaders.

Keywords: Leadership, teacher-leader, vice-principal, rural education, secondary school leadership, elementary school leadership, schooling, transition, school leader recruitment

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The vice-principal is a fundamental actor in the process of translating the school vision into concrete realities (Navanti& McCulloch, 2003). Yost, Vogel, and Rosenberg (2009) emphasize the role school leaders play in influencing key aspects of the school's life, such as teaching and staff development. As such, it is essential to pay particular attention to the transitions of these practitioners into school administration, particularly when the recruitment and retention of school leaders has become one of the greatest challenges for contemporary school systems. According to Wallin (1999):

> rural school divisions are finding it more and more difficult to attract and keep rural administrators. Fewer individuals apply for rural administrative positions, and often the administrative qualifications of those who do apply are questionable. Therefore, the planning process for administrative succession, and how it impacts upon the goals and objectives of an individual administrator and of the school division is of prime importance. (p. 2-3)

In the case of vice-principals, the main challenge "is the lack of experienced administrators: a large number of vice principals new to the position have little time for transition and training once they assume the role in a hectic setting" (Navanti&McCuulloch, 2003, p. 4).In order to respond to this challenge, this research aims to study the experiences of new leaders who have transitioned, or are in the process of transitioning, from the classroom to the vice-principal's office.

The voice and experiences of rural vice-principals, who are new to the role, must be studied in order to understand the factors that influence their decision to leave the classroom and transition to a leadership role. According to DeRuyck (2005), "...it can be argued that the challenges associated with rural positions are unique. It is recognized that rural principals [and by extension, other school leaders] - face challenges that are unique to their environment" (DeRuyck, 2005, p.4).It is important for rural educators, leaders, and school boards, to understand the uniqueness of the experience of new rural leaders. By listening to their voices it will be possible to develop the support mechanisms and resources needed in their journey. Other school leaders, principals, superintendents, and directors may be interested and benefit from a study of this nature; they will be able to assess their leadership preparation programs and

improve them to support the vice-principals' transition process.

Where leadership research is available within the field of education, it tends to focus on the urban context; for instance, Armstrong (2010) studied the "socialization structures and process that impacted the transition from teaching to administration" (p. 685). However, this research places its focus on urban Canadian school districts (p. 685). The goal of Armstrong's (2010) study was to "determine the people, structures, and events that facilitated or hindered their transition and the challenges they encountered in leading and managing diverse urban schools" (p. 685). Arnold, Newman, Gaddy and Dean (2005) concur that "relatively few scholars are studying rural education issues" (p. 1). My research aims to add a rural perspective to the conversation about the transition into the role of vice-principal.

Vice-principals in rural elementary and secondary schools face unique challenges. According to Wallin (2005), "despite variability among communities, research does address characteristics that are common in rural areas such ashigher unemployment, higher poverty, isolation, lack of job opportunities, lower education levels and depopulation" (p. 135). Indeed, as I will demonstrate in the literature review section, research on new rural school leaders or new leaders working within small communities in Ontario is virtually non-existent. This absence is not only a worrying issue in the context of Ontario; other jurisdictions have experienced similar shortages of academic research in the rural context: Ashton and Duncan (2012) indicated that "much research has focused on entry plans for beginning principals, and a lesser amount on rural education, but there is a dearth of literature around the intersection of these two domains, that is, the specific needs of beginning principals [and other school leaders] in rural areas of the US" (p. 19). My research endeavours to bring the two domains together in order to examine the role of new rural vice-principals. As will be evidenced in the literature review, this research is guided by the following themes:

- Many classroom teachers are inclined to take leadership positions, but hesitant to move into an administrative role because of the significant change in their role and identity.
- There is a definite transition and socialization process between teaching and becoming a vice-principal.
- School leadership often focuses on the school principal and not the realities of new vice-principals.

- New vice-principals are often underutilized in their new role and many are not prepared for the leadership role.
- New vice-principals have difficulty balancing their new professional role and their professional lives.

Personal Connection

As of September 2014, I started in a new role as a vice-principal in a rural secondary school. As I was preparing to enter my new job, I searched for literature that could assist me with my transition planning. That is when I recognized that there was not a lot of substantial literature available that focused on making the transition from classroom teacher to an educational leader and administrator, especially in the rural context. Through my research I expect to learn more about the transition that rural educators make when moving from teaching in the classroom to leading the school in an administrative role. For instance, what makes teachers want to become vice-principals? What supports do new vice-principals have during this transition? What obstacles do new vice-principals face while on the job? I hope to develop an understanding of the rural leaders' point of view towards leadership and how their transitional experiences influence them in their new role. I expect that this study will illuminate my understanding of leadership and will provide useful insights to other leaders and my school board, regarding the challenges that new leaders face when entering the vice-principal role.

Significance of Research

This study aims to investigate the process of transition that leaders make from being classroom teachers to vice-principals within a rural school board in Ontario. The research will gather the voices of new vice-principals in order to gain insight into the support mechanisms they had as they decided to enter into a new leadership role. It is also important to discover the challenges each leader faced as he or she left the classroom for the vice-principal job and how each participant handled obstacles faced in their new position. Through an examination of the participants' experiences, this study will describe the challenges that these new leaders faced as they left the classroom for an administrative job.

While this research study and its findings will be valuable in supporting current vice-principals who are new to the role, it will be especially significant for future vice-principals or

teachers considering a leadership role in the rural context. Capturing the voice of rural principals will also be of interest not only to the local school board, but also to other rural boards across the province. School boards will be able to develop aspiring leadership programs and support mechanisms for teachers transitioning into the vice-principal role. "Often, the first formal school leadership role educators engage in is the assistant principalship, which poses new duties and challenges they did not experience as teachers" (Barnett, Shoho, et al., 2012, p.95).

Schools and school boards can use the conclusions and recommendations from this study to design recruitment, assessment, and retention mechanisms for new vice-principals. As Barnett, Shoho, et al., (2012) argued, "…the roles of assistant principals must be understood within the changing policy context of public schools" (p.99). Understanding the supports new leaders receive, and the challenges they encounter in a rural context is essential so researchers, educators, leaders, and school boards are aware of the new vice-principal's voice and its unique leadership experience when transitioning into leadership roles. It is important to note that while the conclusions from the study may not be generalizable across the province, my findings may be transferable to similar rural contexts. Howley (1997) noted that "improvement in rural education requires a logic quite different from the one that still prevails" (p. 2), which is premised on the generalizability of research findings.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of rural classroom teachers as they transition into a new role as vice-principals at rural elementary and secondary schools. Given the small size of the rural school board, both the elementary and secondary panels are appropriate to collect specific data. Although there are some differences in the work of school leaders within different schools and the various panels, in this study I will focus on the similarities between the new vice-principals. The specifics of the job are revealed through the narratives of the eight participants who agreed to participate in this study. This study is exploratory in nature and hopes to uncover the experiences of new leaders as they transition from the classroom into administration.

This research study explores how teachers made the move to the vice-principal role and why they made the decision to take on an administrative role versus staying in the classroom. The study also examines the formal and informal supports new vice-principals received from

peers, colleagues, the school or school district. The study further examines the types of formal education and/or training new vice-principals undertook through recognized organizations such as universities, the school board, or the Ontario Principal's Council, prior to transitioning into the leadership role.

Armstrong (2010) suggests that new vice-principals encounter a socialization process as they transition from teacher to administrator: "this form of socialization includes formal training by professional qualification providers, such as universities, and informal experiences that shape aspirants' notions of what it means to become an administrator" (Armstrong, 2010, p. 688).This research study also outlines the in-role experiences of new rural vice-principals. It will uncover the experiences of vice-principals as they transition into their new role from a classroom teacher. New vice-principals are often assigned to new schools with new staff members and new cultural norms. "Newcomers are subjected to grinding down periods in which they are isolated from their former group and initiated into the norms of the new group" (Armstrong, 2010, p. 688). The research explores the emerging leadership practices of rural vice-principals and describe how they negotiated their new leadership role. Perhaps most importantly, the research study aims to support the work of newly appointed rural elementary and secondary vice-principals and it will constitute a resource available to them as they transition into the new leadership role.

There are a number of external factors which impact the transition into the new vice-principal role. For instance, the board has to have a need for new leadership candidates, with positions that need to be filled. In the small school board where this study is situated there are a limited number of elementary schools and secondary schools that require new administrators. The transition begins when a teacher is selected by the school board's interview panel to be placed in the vice-principal's pool and then is complete when the position becomes permanent. In this rural school board, new vice-principals are in an acting position for one year. During this year a new vice-principal is still a union member, and as such, can still make the decision to return to the classroom. The transition to the vice-principal's role is complete when the decision is made to leave the union and thus becomes a permanent administrator. In Ontario, Bill 160, the *Education Quality Improvement Act* (1997), removed principals and vice-principal from bargaining units and disallowed membership in teachers' unions. Bill 160 also removed the rights of principals and vice-principals to unionize and be involved in any bargaining unit. When a teacher decides to move into administration, he or she must give up his or her membership with

the teacher's union.

Research Questions

In order to examine how educators experience the transition from classroom teacher to school leader my key research question is:

• How do newly appointed rural school leaders experience the transition from teaching in the classroom to the vice-principal role?

The **sub questions** to be explored are:

• What type of formal support (through the school board, university programs, Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)) including training, professional development, mentoring, coaching did vice-principals receive before entering the role?

• What type of informal support (at school through colleagues, at home, or from their communities) do teachers receive in their transition from classroom teacher to vice-principal?

• What challenges do teachers face when transitioning to a vice-principal role?

• What types of professional development programs have been provided in the new role?

• What are the key roles/duties/portfolios assigned to new vice-principals?

• How do newly appointed vice-principals experience the different forms of support, challenges, and their participation in professional development programs in their new role?

It is important to understand the experiences of these new leaders so school boards can address their needs and improve their levels of retention and job satisfaction. Fraser and Brock's (2006) research found that her "interviews revealed that a supportive employing authority, that indicated by word and action that it trusted its principals, was essential to the ideal principal position" (p. 435). Fraser and Brock's (2006) research also found that ideal principal position consisted of support for children and employees, along with positive recognition and financial security lead to a greater retention of school principals (p. 436).

Definitions of Key Terms

Transition

When teachers leave the classroom for an administrative role as vice-principal, they go through a transition process. According to Bridges (2013), there is a difference between change

and transition; change happens quickly while transitions occur slowly over time. He suggests that "Change is situational and happens without people transitioning" (p. 4); whereas a "transition is psychological and is a three-phase process where people gradually accept the details of the new situation and the changes that come with it" (p. 4). The three phases include 1) the ending, losing, and letting go, 2) the neutral zone and 3) the new beginning (Bridges, 2013, p. 4). Bridges (2013) outlines the three phases. During phase one people are forced to let go of something of comfort and feelings may include denial, shock, stress, ambivalence, and uncertainty. The neutral zone is the bridge between the end and the new beginning, which could be a time of anxiety and skepticism, or a time of creativity, innovation, and renewal. The final transition stage, as Bridge (2013) suggests is a time of acceptance, hope, enthusiasm, and an openness to learning (p. 4). As the analysis will demonstrate, the rural teacher who moves from the classroom to the vice-principal's office experiences these three phases of transition. This is the concept of transition that will guide this study.

Rural

Researchers of rural education agree that there is ambiguity surrounding what it means to be rural (Wallin, 2007). Statistics Canada recommends the use of the rural and small town definition: rural population includes individuals living in towns or municipalities outside the commuting zone of larger urban centres of 10,000 or more people (de Plessis, Beshiri, Bollman, &Clemenson, 2001). When it comes to rural education the Canadian Council on Learning (2006) states,

> Rural schools tend to be smaller than urban schools and this carries a number of benefits
> for rural students. Class sizes tend to be smaller, students enjoy more individual attention
> from their teachers, and teachers often know most, if not all, of the students. (p. 3)

There is often an economic disparity between rural areas and their urban counterparts, which impacts education:

> …rural economic conditions can contribute to negative educational outcomes by pulling
> students (particularly males) out of the classroom and pushing them prematurely into the
> workforce. Rural family incomes are lower than urban family incomes and rural youth
> are more likely than their urban counterparts to be called upon to leave school and find
> work to make up for shortfalls in their family budgets. (Canadian Council on Learning,

2006, p. 6).

Vice-Principal

The term vice-principal is commonly used in Ontario; however various terms are used in other jurisdictions. "The terms assistant principal, vice-principal, deputy headteacher" can be used interchangeably (Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012, p. 93). The vice-principal's duties are assigned to them by the principal. "A vice principal shall perform such duties as are assigned to the vice principal by the principal" (R.R.O., 1990, Reg. 298, s. 12. 2). According to Williamson and Scott (2012) "vice-principals are the unsung heroes of instructional leadership" (p. 9). Williamson and Scott (2012) acknowledge that there is not a lot of research and literature surrounding the vice-principal role and that "the duties of the role are not well defined in Ontario or in many other jurisdictions" (p. 9). They also state:

> The *Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF)*provides a description of the practices and competencies of effective school leaders, but it does not address the actual day-to-day tasks of the vice-principal. Indeed, in Ontario, as in many other provinces and states, a vice-principal's duties remain at the discretion of the principal. Third, historically vice-principals have assumed what may appear to be the less appealing tasks of school leadership – discipline, attendance and scheduling (Kwan, 2009), among many others (Williamson & Scott, 2012, p. 10).

The role of the vice-principal will be elaborated upon in the literature review (Ch. 2).

Assumptions

There are several assumptions surrounding this research study. There is an assumption that the position of the vice-principal in elementary and secondary schools is not going to change any time soon. It is assumed that vice-principals will still be needed as part of the education system for the long-term and by assuming this, this study is expected to be of value for future vice-principals. Along with the role of principals, it is assumed that the general organizational structure of the Ontario education system, including schools themselves, will not be changing in the near future.

This study acknowledges that there may be changes in policies and procedures and an overhaul of curriculum may be a very real possibility at any time, however neither of these

changes would significantly alter the role of the vice-principal within education system. This study also operates under the assumption that rural and urban schools operate differently and that a different experience exists for the vice-principals in the rural context. It is assumed that rural and urban school leaders face different challenges due to a number of factors including, geography, demographics, socio-economic factors and cultural differences.

Limitations

There were certain limitations to this study. I was limited to the number of available new vice-principals who are willing to participate in the study. The research was conducted within a small rural school board so the number of participants who were new vice-principals was limited, as there was not a lot of movement in the school board. There are forty-three schools, including elementary and secondary, within the participant rural school board. I invited all new vice-principals, appointed within the last two years, to participate in the study. Due to the small nature of the rural school board and the number of new vice-principals the sample size is small; therefore, the study only expresses themes uncovered from the eight participants and is not a full or in-depth picture of all vice-principals. Finally, the conclusions in this study are limited to this particular rural school board and may not be transferable to other rural school boards.

Time is always a restriction when looking to interview busy professionals. I attempted to arrange enough time to meet with all participants without disrupting their professional and personal lives. Also, given the time constraints of the EdD program, I wasunable to thoroughly explore all of the themes and topics that arise through the interview process; thus, only themes that presented data saturation (Gay, Mills, &Airasian, 2012, p. 143) were explored. The amount of data collected is limited to a specific time and reflects specific experiences. More data gathered in a longer time frame could reveal more relations. The study is limited to the specific data collected at a specific time. These limitations are manageable within the context of the research study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

There is not much research available that explores the subject of rural classroom teachers transitioning to the role of vice-principal. A lot of the available research on teacher – administrator transition comes from Canada and the United States and focuses mostly on the experiences of urban administrators. In this chapter I provide a broad review of the available literature on educational administration and leadership in the rural context and I reflect on its relevance for investigating the experiences of rural teachers as they move into a leadership role in a school board in Southwestern Ontario. In so doing, I draw attention to how the transition of the classroom teacher to the role of vice-principal is linked to issues specific to rural areas, including recruitment and retention of rural administrators by school boards. This chapter is divided into four sections exploring the relevant research that is available. The first section focuses on the specific role and duties of the vice-principal; the second section explores the policy context of vice-principals in Ontario; the third section examines what the transition into the vice-principal role entails. This review shows that, once the teacher is in the new vice-principal role, further transition and socialization takes place. The fourth section in this chapter concentrates on leadership, specifically in rural schools, along with a subsection focusing on the recruiting and retention of rural administrators.

The role of the vice-principal

In order to examine the transition that rural classroom teachers experience when taking on the vice-principal role, it is necessary to understand how the literature describes this leadership role. At the turn of the twentieth century, vice-principals were initially placed in secondary schools due to the increasing school enrollment and the need to manage a larger student population. (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). The role of vice-principal grew out of necessity, therefore "the ambiguity and random nature of school need or perception of need seem to direct the evolution of the assistant more than any clear data or research" (Marshall & Hooley, 2006, p. 2).As classroom teachers enter the leadership role they undergo an adjustment period, however, the vague job description of the position of vice-principal can make the adjustment challenging.

A large part of the adjustment challenges that the new assistant principals experience can be directly traced to the fact that the assistant principalship role lacks clear professional boundaries and policy definitions. Assistant principals who come from a teaching

environment structured by clearly defined tasks and relationships and the predictability of

a prescribed timetable are generally unprepared for the amorphous nature of their new

administrative role and the variety of conflicting expectations and tasks that surround it.

(Armstrong, 2009, p. 5)

 In fact, when it comes to the actual vice-principal role, as Marshall and Hooley (2006) suggest, "no one really understands the complexities, lack of satisfaction, and dilemmas within the role of the assistant principal" (p. 3). Most new vice-principals do not understand the nature of their new job and they often lack the skills necessary to perform their duties, (Hausman, Nebeker, & McCreary, 2001). For many teachers, the vice-principal role is the entry-level position into an administrative career (Marshall & Hooley, 2006). Making the transition from teaching to administration "represents a significant milestone within the personal and professional landscape of education" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 3). However, due to the vague nature of the job description and the complexities of the job, classroom teachers face some challenges transitioning to the new role of vice-principal.

The job description of the vice-principal is vague (Celikten, 2000, p. 67). There are no clear guidelines from the Ministry of Education in Ontario and vice-principal duties vary school to school, principal to principal. Researchers have attempted to define the duties of the vice-principal. There are several perceptions new vice-principals have regarding the realities of their jobs. Researchers found that "many job descriptions are unclear, and exhibit responsibilities of an assistant principal vary between districts and schools" (Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012, p. 93). It is the school principal who determines the duties of the vice-principal. In most cases, these duties meant dealing with the specific needs and issues of a particular school (Barnett, Soho, & Oleszewski, 2012). The principal of the school assigns the duties of the vice-principal and they often relate to school safety, student discipline, attendance and teacher performance appraisals (Celikten, 2000; Chan, Webb, & Bowen, 2003; Hausman, Nebeker, & McCreary, 2001, Lee, Kwan, & Walker, 2009;Rintoul& Kennelly, 2014). Lee, Kwan, and Walker (2009) also suggest that the vice-principal often completes tasks that the principal does not want to do (p. 188). Most vice-principals tend to fill their days with, as Good (2008) describes, the three Bs – "books, behaviour and buses" (p. 46).

The job of the vice-principal can be complex and often new vice-principals lack an understanding of what the role entails. The role is much more broad than vice-principals are led

to believe in training programs. "Once in the job, the operational aspect turns out to be larger than they anticipate and they see the role as more proactive and broader than they even realized when they began the promotion process" (Nanavati& McCulloch, 2003, p. 7). One of Nanavati and McCulloch's (2003) research participants summed up the differences between being a classroom teacher and a new vice-principal: "The excitement in the classroom is just a microcosm of what the whole school can be. The role of the VP has always been about service to others and changing the environment for the better" (p. 7). In their 2003 research report to the Ontario Principal's Council, Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) outlined the major tasks that now tend to fall on vice-principals.

> These include a new layer of organization and administration to support standardized testing (EQAO Math and Literacy), a Teacher Advisor Program and a more intensive Teacher Performance Appraisal process. The design and monitoring of teacher supervision (from the legislated .67 assignment) is extremely time consuming. As teacher supervisions have increased and relations between the government and teacher federations have deteriorated, tasks that were formerly accomplished through staff committees have now, in many schools, ended up on the vice principal's "to do" list. At the same time, vice-principals have seen a tremendous increase in clerical duties as the secretarial supports have been eroded with funding cuts to office administration. (p. 8).

Schools and school boards expect new vice-principals to be instructional leaders and contribute to build staff professional capacity. However, new vice-principals are overwhelmed by learning their new job and dealing with students and parents to be worried about the higher level management of the school and being instructional leaders(Rintoul& Kennelly, 2014). When vice-principals have a role in leading school initiatives they are working in collaboration with, or under the supervision of, the principal and not as an independent school leader directing their own initiatives (Rintoul& Kennelly, 2014).

The policy context of the vice-principalship in Ontario

In order to become a vice-principal in Ontario there are several steps the candidate must follow. One must first become a teacher and then a member of the Ontario College of Teachers, which has their own provincial requirements and must follow provincial legislation. (OCT). According to OCT, teachers must possess an "'acceptable post-secondary degree' means a

degree for which a person is required to complete at least 90 post-secondary credits or equivalent…" (Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996, Regulation 175/10, *Teachers' Qualifications*, Part I, Subsection 1). In addition to the post-secondary degree, Ontario teachers also require a "'one-year program of professional education' means a teacher education program that was accredited under the accreditation regulation" (Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996, Regulation 175/10, *Teachers' Qualifications*, Part I, Subsection 1). Next, a potential vice-principal "must have completed an acceptable post-secondary degree and have qualifications in three divisions, one of which must be intermediate, grades 7 through 10 (ages 12-16). Each must also have five years of successful classroom teaching experience in elementary or secondary education" (Rintoul& Kennelly, 2014, p. 44). These authors also note that aspiring leaders require one of the following: two specialists qualifications; one specialist and half a Master's degree; a Master's degree; a doctorate, or at least 30 postsecondary graduate credits or the equivalent. Following the completion of these educational requirements teachers wishing to seek qualification as an administrator must complete the *Principal Qualifications Program* (PQP) parts I and II. Once these are completed candidates must complete a 60-hour leadership practicum (Regulation 176/10, *Teachers' Qualifications,* Part III, Subsections, 32-34).

The *Principal Qualification Program* is designed and delivered by approved Ontario providers as stipulated by the accrediting body: The *Ontario College of Teachers* (Regulation, 347/02, *Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs,* Part IV, Subsection 24). The courses may be taken through several providers, such as approved universities, the *Ontario Principals Council* (OPC), or the *Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario* (CPCO). The instructors of the *Principal Qualification* courses are current principals in Ontario. According to Rintol and Kennelly (2014), "the certification program content and expected achievement match the skills and knowledge outlined in two documents: *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* and *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* (Regulation, 347/02, *Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs*, PAER IV, Subsection, 24)" (p. 44). The content of the program revolves around: theory of pedagogy, education law, human resources, as well as teacher supervision and evaluation (p.45). These are the basic requirements in order to gain entry to the vice-principal role; however, there are other documents that guide a leader's practice once in the office: The Ontario leadership framework and the principal/vice-principal performance appraisal.

Finally, the Ontario Leadership Strategy (OLS), a Ministry plan for leadership

development, created the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF), which has been adopted by the Ontario's Ministry of Education and local school boards. The Ontario Leadership Framework outlines the performance standards for Ontario administrators and is "intended to permeate all professional development, recruitment and retention initiatives for school leaders in the province" (Riveros & Verret Wei Wei, 2016, p.535). It consists of five domains leaders can use to frame their work:

1) Setting directions
2) Building relationships and developing people
3) Developing the organization to support desired practices
4) Improving the instructional program
5) Securing accountability

Within the domains there are 21 specific leadership practices for school leaders. The OLF provides guidelines for leaders to use in their leadership practice. The OLF is designed to be

> a set of leadership tools which will help individuals grow and refine their leadership
> skills. It also provides a roadmap for organizations to increase their leadership potential
> so that leaders and organizations can put advanced leadership concepts to work on a daily
> basis to meet educational goals and achieve concrete results. (The Institute for
> Educational Leadership, 2013, p. 2)

The OLF provides an outline for leadership practice, but certainly having an outline does not ensure effective leadership and organizational improvement.

> The best possible instructional leadership cannot be accomplished simply by having a
> leadership framework of effective practices and personal resources in place. Rather, there
> is a need to provide continuous guidance and support to help Ontario's educational
> leaders further develop and strengthen their practice... (Ontario Ministry of Education, p.
> 2, 2012-13).

The OLF describes leadership practices that support the work of school administrators. It reflects best practices for school improvement and student achievement, based on research. When applied, the framework outlines the need for administrators to be instructional leaders. As instructional leaders, administrators are expected to be involved in instruction through their daily activities through their work with staff in improving school and classroom practices. The OLF

expects new vice-principals to follow their performance standards in order to grow and refine their leadership skills and meet school, board, and provincial goals.

The transition from teacher to vice-principal

When it comes to "school leadership", most people often think of the school principal and not necessarily of the vice-principal. The vice-principal is viewed as working for the school principal. Research by Barnett, Shoho, and Olesezwski (2012) explores the job realities of new and experienced vice-principals and suggests that, "until recently, assistant principals have been an underutilized resource in schools" (p. 92). The principalis a key leader in the school setting and according to these authors,the role of the vice-principal has been understudied (Oleszewski, Soho, &Barnett, 2012). "The position of vice-principal is considered to be a critical one, as it is the entry level position for an administrative career" (Lee, Kwan, & Walker, 2009, p. 188). The new administrators were classroom teachers prior to entering a new role in the vice-principal's office. Many teachers were school leaders before moving into an administrative role; however, Newton, Riveros, and da Costa (2013) argue that many classroom teachers are hesitant to move into a leadership role, as they fear losing their connection to the classroom and teaching and learning. Their research study found that a lot of the teachers who eventually take on leadership roles do not start out with a desire to move into formal leadership or administrative positions. The teachers gain experience in leadership positions within the school which builds their capacity and promotes their leadership capabilities (Newtown, Riveros, & da Costa, 2013).Some insights into this process were revealed by a study conducted by Marshall and Hooley (2006):

> Teachers considering administrative positions search for signals of support and encouragement and take action to show their worth long before they ever actually apply for an administrative position – a sort of aspiration-building and self-selection process. When the signals are positive, they raise their aspirations and start to devise ways to move from their current positions to new positions that are more central, powerful, and responsible and higher in status and pay. Sometimes they feel a "tap on the shoulder" (literally or figuratively) when some knowledgeable and potentially powerful person makes an extra effort to help them discover their leadership potential. (Marshall & Hooley, 2006, p.39)

Also, Armstrong (2009) noted that "the transition from teacher to vice-principal is an important

professional and organizational passage that carries significant dreams and transformational possibilities for new administrators and their communities" (p. 686). Armstrong (2010) focuses on administrators who work in urban settings and those who attempt to address the needs of the diverse population within their school demographic. Indeed, the new leader faces challenges when leading and managing diverse urban schools. Armstrong's (2010) research centres on the rites of passage and the process of socialization that teachers must go through in order to move beyond the role of teacher and into the role of vice-principal. Armstrong (2010) argues that "the organizational rites of passage that work together to divest initiates of their previous teacher values and socialize them into traditional administrative roles" (p. 686). Armstrong references Hart (1995) and Heck (1995) when discussing the process of socialization as teachers become members of the leadership team. She suggests that socialization process begins when teachers consider becoming administrators and begin to learn the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that reflect administrators (Armstrong, 2010). The research presented by Armstrong (2010) reveals that during the transition from teaching to the vice-principalship, leaders experienced a broad range of emotions, various supports, some obstacles, and encounter school district rituals; however, the new vice-principals developed strategies to see them through the transition process. This transition seems to imply a transformation in the new vice-principal's mindset.During the first-year on the job, vice-principals must change their thinking from classroom teacher to a focus on the entire school district (Barnett, Shoho,& Oleszewski, 2012).

Potential and new vice-principals lack a clear understanding of the nature of the job and because of this may feel ill-equipped to take on a leadership role. Many assistant principals do not feel prepared for their leadership roles(Busch & MacNeil, 2014; Hausman, Nebeker, & McCreary, 2001). "The specific roles and duties of assistant principals range from relieving the principals' burdens, to providing administrative support for teachers, to attending to the welfare of teachers" (Barnett, Shoho & Oleszewski, 2012, p. 93). These researchers examined the studies from around the world and found that the two most prominent duties of vice-principals are student management and instructional leadership (Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012). Lee, Kwan and Walker (2009) note that the vice-principals' specific duties, roles and responsibilities are assigned at the discretion of the school principal; they found that vice-principals in Hong Kong believed that 'strategic direction and policy environment' are the key to school success, above 'staff management' which tends to be the focus during the vice-principal's work day.

Greenfield (1985) suggests that to make the role more professionally satisfying the focus should be on instruction, along with learning, and that it is necessary for new vice-principals to receive "role relevant learning opportunities…that functionally serve as preparation for subsequent and broader responsibilities of leadership and management associated with principalship" (p. 87). The vice-principals tend to perform a care taker role and their primary duty is dealing with disruptive students/student management (Barnett, Shoho, &Olezewski, 2012). Due to a lack of understanding of the job and all that it involves, along with a lack of relevant training, new vice-principals may have difficulty balancing their personal and professional lives (Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012).

There are numerous reasons why a classroom teacher might decide to make the transition into the vice-principal role. Armstrong (2010) suggests that teachers may be ready to seek a new challenge beyond the classroom and that they would like to learn more about education and be involved in school policy (p. 567). Many aspiring leaders also want to make a difference for more students in a school as a principal rather than as a classroom teacher (Armstrong, 2010). Armstrong (2010) argues that "many aspirants indicate that their peers encouraged them to seek leadership positions because of their leadership capabilities, sense of vision, and ability to lead others" (p. 567). The transition from classroom teacher to vice-principal appears simple enough; however, as Armstrong (2009) notes it is not a straightforward change in roles and responsibilities (p. 4). "Crossing the boundary between teaching and administration precipitates a challenging cognitive, emotional, and social journey across uncharted personal, professional, and organizational territory" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 4). Her research suggests that the new job is filled with shocks and surprises along with a number of dilemmas and challenges (p.4). Armstrong (2012) suggests that the career change "exposes novices to new responsibilities, the norms and expectations of a different reference group" (p. 399). She goes on to suggest that in the transition process the new vice-principal encounters a number of socialization factors forcing them to conform to disciplinary and managerial roles (p. 399). "Vice-principals who were appointed in the last decade have experienced additional socialization challenges because of rapid organizational reforms that carry legal obligations for enforcement" (Armstrong, 2010, p. 686).

As teachers leave the classroom and transition into the vice-principal role, they face a new sense of reality and have to build a new identity, often in a new school away from former teaching colleagues. Early on in the administrative role, new vice-principals are likely to

experience a cultural shift that is "characterized by a sense of dislocation and feelings of ambiguity" (Armstrong, 2015, p. 113). In her interviews with vice-principals, Armstrong (2015) found that "all of the vice-principals reported that they felt they did not belong in this new role or environment during the early months of their transition" (p. 113). The vice-principals shared a sense of displacement as they relinquished their classroom teaching role and left behind relationships with students and colleagues for their new administrative role (Armstrong, 2015). Sigford (1998) acknowledges that "the separation process from identity as a teacher to identity as administrator creates a sense of loss" (p. 7). The new vice-principals felt like outsiders amongst teachers as there was a role shift in those relationships. Armstrong (2015) suggests that vice-principals had

> the feeling of 'doing all by yourself' and the shift in teachers' perceptions and collegial interactions were poignant reminders to the vice-principal of the unexpected loss of a larger community of peers and their exit from the teaching culture. The corresponding lack of an administrative community led to feelings of being alone and isolated. (p. 114)

Some vice-principals feel stress as they have limited power over their own role, which also leads to unmanageable workloads and long days at work.

Compared to being a classroom teacher, the work of new vice-principals can be intense and overwhelming for new school leaders. "Unlike teaching where they enjoyed the privacy of their classroom and had a predictable timetable, participants felt like they were at the 'beck and call' of the school and external community and had little control over their time" (Armstrong, 2015, p. 114). Vice-principals are expected to enter the new role and take on all tasks and assignments straight away. Vice-principals receive little time to ease into the new role (Armstrong, 2015, p. 114-115). Many of Armstrong's (2015) participants described their experiences as "a 'baptism by fire' and 'jumping off the deep end" or "you are always battling smoke and fire...some days you feel like a puppet with, with a lot of different people pulling the strings" (p. 115). Armstrong (2010) presents four challenges new vice-principals encounter when they take on the job. "First, novice principals experience conflicts and tensions with staff members" (p. 568). The second challenge is that the new vice-principal is inevitably compared to his or her predecessor, "resulting in pressure to match previous administrator's accomplishments" (p. 568). Third, many principals become overwhelmed with the workload, the amount of paperwork, etc. (p. 568). And finally, "the pressure from a variety of stake-holders

pushes principals in the spotlight to increase student performance at the behest of vocal policymakers, community members, and parents" (Armstrong, 2010, p. 568-569).

The transition from classroom teacher to vice-principal can be overwhelming and lead to a sense of isolation. It is important that the new vice-principal seek out people or groups who will support him or her.

> Participants described intentionally seeking out a wide range of individuals and groups in order to access assistance and advice and to build collaborative relationships. For the most part, these interactions were with fellow vice-principal colleagues, business and operations staff, teachers and supervisory officers. (Armstrong, 2015, p. 116)

In her research, Armstrong's (2015) participants identified the support of their principal and mentoring as a significant factor in their growth and development as new administrators. "The process of listening to and dialoguing with their principals and working with them to create their own personal growth plans helped the participants develop a better understanding of their role expectations and how they fit into the school" (Armstrong, 2015, p. 116). Principals have the ability to support, encourage, advise, and mentor new vice-principals as they possess experience and knowledge of the school and culture (Armstrong, 2009). Principals provide the most support to new vice-principals by advising, supporting, and allowing flexibility (Hausman, Nebeker, & McCreary, 2001).The relationship between the principal and vice-principal "is a social contract that benefits on many levels" (Hausman, Nebeker, & McCreary, 2001).The vice-principal is also expected to support the principal and his or her vision, and the new vice-principal should be honest with the principal and keep him or her informed about school happenings (Mertz, & McNeely, 1999).

Receiving support from the principal means having a mentor and someone who can provide feedback and advice. New vice-principals emphasize the benefits of formal and informal mentoring and support received from superintendents and principals who understand the transition process and the needs of new vice-principals (Armstrong, 2014). Mentoring can be used to strengthen the leadership team (Hausman, Nebeker, & McCreary, 2001).The vice-principals need someone who takes "time to answer questions, model appropriate administrative behaviours, explain policies and procedures, demonstrate practices, and provide growth-promoting feedback" (Armstrong, 2014, p. 19). New vice-principals should be paired with a principal who understands their developmental needs, and someone who is empathetic enough

and experienced enough to provide emotional support and relational trust (Armstrong, 2014). Emotional and technical support are required for vice-principals to make the transition into the new role.

Building relationships with people in the school is a key to success for a vice-principal. Developing positive relationships will aid a vice-principal in feeling comfortable within the school. Armstrong's (2015) research "described 'people interactions' as one of the most difficult aspects of their role, they reported experiencing a greater degree of comfort in dealing with people and building relationships over time" (p. 117). Building relationships with both staff and students increases leadership confidence and competence. The new vice-principals benefit from the informal supports they receive from not only their principal, but other colleagues such as support staff, teachers, and school board staff (Armstrong, 2014).Vice-principals see their role as knowing the political, social, and cultural landscape. Learning and gathering this information requires new vice-principals to build a network of relationships (Armstrong, 2009). As a new vice-principal "negotiating this vast network of relationships required new levels of interpersonal and intrapersonal literacy" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 108). In their new role, vice-principals must develop networks with colleagues in order to "facilitate their ability to manage schools proactively and to impose a leadership framework on their role" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 108). These networks can be formal or informal, but they allow vice-principals to collaborate with colleagues in order to share information which would assist them in their new role. Some of the benefits of new vice-principals working together include: sharing information, balancing school responsibilities with personal growth, connecting with each other, developing an understanding of each other, and simply supporting one another (OPC 2007). These networks can be seen as a "survival necessity" (Michael, & Young, 2006).

New vice-principals require extensive support when transitioning into their new role. Armstrong (2015) outlines three areas of support that are key when transitioning from the classroom to the vice-principals' office. "These are: accurate information about their job; assistance when interpreting things in their new role and setting; and opportunities to develop relationships with others with whom they can talk and test reality" (p. 119). It is important that new vice-principals have access to supports such as, mentoring, job shadowing, apprenticeships, or internships. Through these programs, aspiring leaders and new vice-principals can develop their leadership skills and style. Armstrong (2015) also argues that aspiring and new vice-

principals should be aware of the challenges they will face in the new role and that there are losses they will face when making the transition to administration. "Instituting these initiatives can assist school districts in retaining new administrators and addressing the shrinking pools of qualified administrative candidates" (Armstrong, 2015, p. 119). Armstrong's timely and relevant research focuses on the experiences of new vice-principals in Ontario, which aligns nicely with this research study. Armstrong (2015) believes

> New vice-principals represent the future face of leadership at the district and provincial levels in Ontario, and their formative experiences will influence not only how they lead, but also how they socialize others into school leadership. Listening to and responding to new vice-principals' voices will provide valuable information regarding how (or how not) to prepare and support new leaders to meet the changing demands of school administration. (p. 119)

This research study endeavours to contribute to a similar field of research study as Armstrong's work.

Leadership issues in rural schools

The available leadership research tends to focus on the school principal, rather than the vice-principal, so this section explores leadership as it pertains to both principals and vice-principals, or administrators. "When focusing on the effectiveness of leadership in rural schools, research highlights that rural principals commonly face specific sociocultural and economic challenges associated with the school community" (Preston, Jakubiec, &Kooymans, 2013). When it comes to rural lifestyles, "there continues to be a widespread sense that rural is synonymous with peace and quiet, nature, community and isolation" (Gammon, 2007, p. 6). Wallin (2003) explains that, in fact, rural communities have a range of characteristics on a continuum of economic, social, and demographic growth and decline. Wallin (2003) also states that, "there do exist some characteristics that are common to rural areas, such as, higher unemployment, higher poverty, isolation, lack of job opportunities, lower education levels, and depopulation" (p. 79).

Rural school boundaries are often large, with small populations that are frequently in decline so it is difficult to discern what is "typically rural" (Duncan & Stock, 2010). Traditionally, rural communities have been perceived as being "more conservative and less

progressive than urban communities. However, because economic and demographic forces have caused extensive changes to rural communities, this belief may no longer have as much force as it may have once had" (Wallin, 2003, p. 79). Brun and Delany-Barmann (2001), characterize the rural school culture as "having a strong sense of community among the teachers, administration, and the students reflective of the social and kinship ties with the community. These schools also have a strong sense of being an integrated part of the extended community in which they are located" (p. 9). In rural areas, schools often serve as community centres for meetings, activities, and political agendas (Gammon, 2007). Wallin (2005) explains that "a sense of community ownership of the rural school is reinforced by the fact that often the rural school is the largest employer, claims the largest share of the local tax dollars, and is the location of most community events" (p. 136).

This review of literature evidences that most research focusing on rural school leaders pays special attention to the school principal.In order to be appointed an administrator in a rural school, it is beneficial for the new administrator to have some type of connection with the school community where they will be working (Preston, Jakubiec, &Kooymans 2013). It is important that the school leader understands and fit in with the rural context. Administrators who were raised in the rural community tend to have a greater understanding of the values, priorities, culture, and lifestyle of the rural community. "Possessing this personal-historical link to the school community is particularly helpful when principals have to deal with tensions that sometimes spill into the school from stakeholder community groups" (Preston, Jakubiec, &Kooymans, 2013, p. 3). Rural administrators who are not familiar with the rural community may be seenas outsiders by other community members who tend to be suspicious of outsiders (Preston, Jakubiec, &Kooymans, 2013). Leadership should no longer be the domain of only the school principal, but should be distributed to other school leaders such as vice-principals (Kwan, 2009). Yet, it is still pertinent for researchers to pay attention to principals as school leaders, after all, the vice-principals will be the future principals. "The competence of VPs is of prime concern not only because they are part of the school leadership team but because, in many school systems, they are often appointed to the position of school principal" (Kwan, 2009, p. 191). However, it is important to note that the rural context differs for the rural and urban school leaders.The research focusing on the rural principal provides some context and insight into the experience of the rural vice-principal. Indeed, rural vice-principals and vice-principals are facing

challenges in the globalized, 21st century:

>part of the overall challenge lies in that very little of a principal's environment remains static, and that he or she must continuously ride a wave of change while working to create, maintain, and grow a school environment which optimizes the development and preparedness of the students within the school. (DeRuyck, 2005, p. 3)

It is important that vice-principals have access to ongoing learning and professional development, and in this respect rural leaders may be at a disadvantage (DeRuyck, 2005). "Rural principals who have limited or no access to ongoing professional development are therefore at a significant disadvantage when it comes to sustainable success, because this success depends to some extent on the availability of ongoing learning opportunities" (DeRuyck, 2005, p. 7). When it comes to professional development for rural administrators, they are at a disadvantage due to geographic limitations. "Geographical isolation from resources or facilities for professional development/higher learning were causes for concern in rural areas" (Wallin, 2005, p. 150). Wallin (2005) elaborates on the isolation factors impacting rural school administrators, "unfortunately, the time, the distance, and financial resources necessary for administrators to access them were demanding" (p. 150).

Rural school boards and urban school boards are two different entities with access to different resources. It is these discrepancies which sometimes pose a challenge for rural school leaders. Urban school leaders have greater access to universities for onsite courses, greater networking opportunities, and fewer budgetary concerns when it comes to professional development, compared to their rural counterparts (DeRuyck, 2005). Some of the other challenges rural administrators face more frequently than their urban counterpart include: teacher recruitment, staff turnover, declining enrolment, grade level combinations, the expanded role of the principal, and student attendance and mobility (DeRuyck 2005). DeRuyck (2005) concludes that there is a "need for principals in rural environments to use a distributed leadership model, where teachers can take leadership roles with various initiatives throughout the school" (p.21). These findings suggest that rural school leaders are in a precarious position that requires them to collaborate well with staff and members of the community.Ashton and Duncan (2012) state:

>the challenges new rural administrators face often include lack of decision-making experience, feelings of professional loneliness and isolation, little administrative support, as well as standardized compliance with state and national requirements that do not

account for school or staff size. (p. 19)

Ashton and Duncan (2012) explore the themes of rural schools and the new principalship together. These two authors aim to explore challenges new rural administrators face and provide tools or strategies new principals can utilize or implement while on the job: "when a new leader assumes the principal role, the combination of being both inexperienced and in a rural setting can be overwhelming" (Ashton & Duncan, 2012, p. 20). Also, Clarke and Wildy (2008) argue that the new leader must be "contextually literate" (p. 736) and "the requirement of school leaders to be able to read the complexities of their contexts" (p. 736). Clarke and Wildy (2008) advocate for leadership preparation that would "involve theory and practical leadership skill development, as well as rich local contextual knowledge" (p. 729). New school leaders must ensure they are sensitive to and respect rural cultural values, which may be seen as unusual from an urban perspective (Ashton & Duncan, 2012). Coaching and mentoring from experienced principals can help ease the transition of new leaders. Mentors can provide guidance, support, and can encourage new principals to take risks. Mentors can help new vice-principals "navigate the rural school setting where principals and their families are an integral part of the community" (Ashton & Duncan, 2012, p. 21). In her research Wallin (2005) stated that in rural areas

> Many administrators said that their upward career mobility had been fostered more quickly than it would have been if they had been in a large district because they were able to showcase their leadership talent and build professional connections in a more intimate environment. However, the lack of diversity and/or number of administrative positions in rural areas could become a hindrance unless one was willing to move out of the area. (p. 144)

According to Ashton and Duncan (2012) there can be a lack of mentors in rural areas due to distance and a lack of principal networks. Ashton and Duncan (2012) argue that rural administrators tend to underestimate the level of stress they will encounter and the amount of personal resilience required to fulfill the role. Rural school leaders require healthy coping mechanisms in order to deal with the isolation, stress, and loneliness of leadership (Ashton & Duncan, 2012). The authors suggest exercise as a healthy coping mechanism. Tied to this idea is the importance of being resilient with a purpose. It is important that the new principal maintain positive thoughts and action in order to overcome adversity. The new school leader should create a personal mission statement "because rural school principals are often the lone administrator in

their building, a personal mission statement that delineates their priorities and can serve as a guide as they sift through the many competing demands of the day" (Ashton & Duncan, 2012, p. 22).

The rural context brings with it a variety of unique issues that the school administrator must contend with. They face unique demographic, economic, and social concerns. They also have less access to resources and professional development opportunities. The schools are an integral part of the community, as are the school leaders. The research focusing on rural school vice-principals is limited and there is a need to recruit and retain quality school leaders. The school boards and school leaders must have a familiarity with the current issues facing the rural community in order to recruit and retain future leaders.

Recruiting and Retaining Rural Administrators

School administrator shortages are an issue across North America. Howley and Pendarvis (2002) acknowledge that in the United States, school districts are struggling to recruit and retain administrators (p. 1). And Jacobson (2005) acknowledges that the problem of recruitment and retention is not just an American concern. "While interest grows in the effect of leadership on school and student performance, there is also growing perception that educational leadership is in relatively short supply in the U.S., Canada and many other parts of the world" (Jacobson, 2005, p. 457). Jacobson (2005) presents three ways to interpret "shortage".

A shortage of individuals willing to undertake leadership preparation;

A shortage of individuals who have prepared for leadership roles, but who are unwilling to apply for leadership positions;

A shortage of individuals who have prepared for leadership roles and are willing to apply for vacant positions, but who are perceived to lack the skills to be successful. (p. 258-259)

There is not a lot of research focusing on the recruitment and retention of rural vice-principals. Most available research focuses on principals and is primarily focused on the urban context. Many of the issues surrounding recruitment and retention of rural principals can be applied to the recruitment and retention of rural vice-principals. Normore (2004) examines the Canadian context and the concerns surrounding recruitment and retention of school leaders by school districts. "Due to the lack of interest in the administrative role, and inadequate leadership

preparation of individuals within the school ranks, school districts report challenges in recruitment and selection processes for school leaders" (Normore, 2004, p. 1). Normore (2004) and Jacobson (2005) present several reasons why teachers are not interested in pursuing an administrative role. Normore (2004) suggests,

> Traditionally, if teachers wanted to earn more money, achieve higher status, or earn greater respect, they would leave the classroom and move toward a principalship or some other administrator role. Today, fewer teachers are likely to see administration as a way to improve their salaries, prestige or respect among other colleagues. (Jacobson, 2005, p. 1).

Jacobson (2005) concurs with Normore's sentiments and argues that there are a number of explanations for this shortage, however he believes one cause is the narrowing differential between teacher and administrator salaries (p. 458). According to Jacobson (2005), administrators are also under more work-related stress due to an increase of responsibilities along with more public scrutiny and accountability for student achievement (p. 458). There is an increase in stress and responsibility that has led to fewer teachers considering a move into a leadership role as the job is becoming more complex, and demanding, and it is these increased expectations which havehelped to cause a shortage in applicant pools (Normore, 2004). Because of the apparent lack of interest in taking on leadership positions, school boards need to improve recruitment and retention strategies. School boards must address the administrative shortages by investing time and money into developing recruitment and retention policies in order to attract qualified candidates into the leadership role. (Normore, 2004).

Effective recruitment practices and policies are necessary in order to combat the negative perceptions associated with the administrative position. "People without school administrative experiences have negative perceptions and view of the role of the school administrator" (Normore, p. 2004, p. 3). Normore (2004) suggests that because of this negativity "many highly qualified, competent, and talented teachers dismiss careers in administration because they do not want to sit in an office all day, hassle teachers, discipline students, work with irate parents, or push paper –all activities frequently associated with the stereotypical role of the school administrator" (p. 3).

Geographic location is also a challenge when recruiting and retaining administrators; "geographic isolation remained the most highly rated challenge in rural districts not near urban

areas" (Wood, Finch, &Mirecki, 2013, p.8). The researcher also linked the challenge of social isolation to the rural geographic location. According to Wallin (1999), some of the other constraints and stresses on the rural principal are:

> a) declining enrolments, an emphasis on accountability, a perceived push for democratically run schools, increased technology, increased responsibilities as outlined in the Education Act (1978); and b) the increased attention to the quality of teacher's work life and the resultant implications for school policies and practices, negotiations and contracts, and scheduling of instructional and support time. (p. 5)

Rural school boards are struggling to attract, recruit, and retain qualified rural administrators (Wallin, 1999). In the same line of thought, Howley and Pendarvis (2002) noted that "difficulties in recruiting and retaining qualified administrators suggest an imbalance between the demands of the job and the resources available to meet those demands, particularly in underfunded districts" (p.5). To cope with these challenges, Wallin (1999) argues that school boards need to have a plan in place for administrative succession. She believes that boards and directors must recruit and develop potential leaders from within their existing system and that candidates be encouraged to apply for leadership positions (p. 5). Howley&Pendarvis offer several strategies for recruiting and retaining new rural school administrators:

> (1) publicizing the satisfactions of the job, (2) encouraging applications from women and minorities, (3) improving salaries and benefits, and (4) providing professional development programs that enable new administrators to meet the challenges of educational leadership. (p. 3)

Teachers make up the largest pool of potential principal or vice-principal applicants, so there needs to be an understanding as to why teachers do not apply for administrative positions (Cruzeiro &Boone, 2009). Since school leaders play a key role in education, it is imperative that school boards recruit and retain the best candidates. For instance, in Wood, Finch, and Mirecki's (2013) research, the administrator "is seen as a building manager, administrator, politician, change agent, and instructional leader. During the recent past, the most sought-after type of administrator is an instructional leader who can create an atmosphere focused on teaching and learning to improve student achievement" (Wood, Finch, &Mirecki, 2013, p. 1). According to Wood, Finch, and Mirecki (2013), due to the significant role of the administrator, it is imperative that school boards select capable and well-prepared school leaders, as schools and school

districts are commonly evaluated based on student achievement. They further argue that not only is the selection process of school leaders important,

> rather it is the retention of principals who can articulate a vision that will engage teachers, parents, the district, and the larger community in the long term […]. When attempting to staff rural schools with effective principals, school boards of education find themselves at a disadvantage in recruiting and retaining administrators (Wood, Finch, &Mirecki, 2013, p. 1-2).

Administrator recruitment and retention are significant policy issues for school boards as they are less likely to attract qualified principals or vice-principalsif working conditions are not desirable (Beesley& Clark, 2015). Wood, Finch, andMirecki (2013) suggest that "rural areas may not be as attractive as urban areas to principal applicants because 'rural areas have experienced shrinking tax bases, shifting local economies, and brain drain among young people who move to more urban areas after high school graduation'" (p. 2). The recruitment and retention of rural school leaders may also be challenging "because school board trustees and hiring personnel appear to value candidates who possess a panoramic, personal, and historical understanding of the cultural, social, political, historical, and economical foundations of the school community" (Preston, Jakubiec, &Kooymans, 2013, p. 3).

School districts need to understand and meet the unique needs of the rural administrator in order to recruit and retain quality candidates. "Rural leadership is more demanding because many districts have no middle management and depend on their administrators to carry out additional responsibilities" (Wood, Finch, &Mirecki, 2013, p. 2). This sentiment is also expressed by Beesley& Clark (2015), "rural principals often feel isolated in their efforts to create positive change because they are tasked with greater levels of responsibility than non-rural principals, despite lower salaries" (p. 243). Howley andPendarvis (2002) acknowledge the workload of rural administrators as they tend to work long hours with low pay and are expected to attend school functions and community events (p. 3). The idea of community connections is reiterated in Beesley and Clark (2015). Their research suggests that rural leaders value a close-knit community and understand the unique challenges that face a small school district (p. 243).

There are several factors which contribute to successful recruitment and retention of new vice-principals. Researchers note the importance of helping school leaders build and sustain support networks in order to enhance the retention of new school leaders. (Howley&Pendarvis,

2002). In their study focusing on Catholic administrators and job satisfaction, Fraser and Brock (2006) summarized several factors that encouraged retention of the principals, including financial security, commitment to Catholic education, continuing challenge of the job, and the vision for the school (p. 436). According to the researchers, the ideal principal position would contain the following elements:

- An employing authority who provided support in the areas of children with special needs, legal liabilities, unprofessional staff, conflict with unions
- An independent school
- Recognition for a job well done
- A supportive employing authority
- Clearly defined expectations for the principal's role. (Fraser & Brock, 2006, p. 437).

The research of Wood, Finch, andMirecki (2013), outlines retention strategies, with the top two identified as creating a positive school culture and investing in professional development opportunities. "While the same highly rated recruitment strategies noted above were primarily endorsed across school district communities, districts in small towns endorsed offering increased salaries/raises at a slightly higher rate than using technology for mentoring and professional development" (p. 9). Their research findings varied when it came to small towns and how leaders could be retained when compared to urban locations. Gajda andMilitello (2008) "recommend creative efforts to improve the recruitment of new principals, that these efforts target educators earlier in their teaching career and emphasize the need for individuals committed to the improvement of teaching and learning" (p. 17).

Conclusion of Literature Review

A review of the relevant literature in the field has provided insight into significant research that has explored issues surrounding the experiences of classroom teachers as they transition into the vice-principal role. All of the research and literature makes a significant contribution to this research study. However, while much of the research has been undertaken in Canada, and the United States, there is little research focused on the rural context. This thesis seeks to explore what is happening in relation to the transition to vice principal in rural communities in Southwestern Ontario.In the first section, the role of the principal, the leadership

role is explored, and the lack of a clear job description is outlined. The vice-principal job description is vague and duties are as assigned by the principal, which usually focuses on school safety and teacher performance appraisals. The actual vice-principal job tends to be very complex. The next section in the literature outlines the policy context of the vice-principalship in Ontario. This section outlines the provincial legislation required to become a teacher and the qualifications necessary in order to enter administration. It also outlines the Ontario Leadership Framework, which is a guideline for leaders to utilize to guide their practice, as well as an evaluation tool used to assess the performance of new vice-principals. The OLF also provides strategies for school boards to use when planning recruitment and retention initiatives.

Following this section, some of the literature exploring the transition from teacher to vice-principal is presented; noting that this area has been understudied. Teachers tended to be school leaders before entering the administrative role. The research suggests that it is a major transition for teachers undertaking the leadership role, due to the emotional toll, lack of supports, and obstacles encountered. This section explores reasons why teachers would want to take on the vice-principal role. The transition is not a straightforward process and involves more than just a change in roles and responsibilities. The change can be a challenging emotional and social journey for the new vice-principal. There are a number of socialization factors which the new vice-principal experiences as they have little time to ease into the new job.

This chapter also explores the leadership issues that rural schools face. The final section focuses on the problems surrounding recruiting and retaining administrators in rural school boards. School boards must ensure they recruit and retain quality administrators in order to build staff capacity, improve student achievement, and implement the school board's vision and initiatives. The rural context is not a romantic, idyllic context; rather it has a number of issues to address, such as poverty, unemployment, isolation, and lower educational levels. Rural schools tend to have a strong sense of community and the school leaders must understand their role in this context when it comes to relationships, politics, and culture.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides the theoretical framework that supports the research study, as well as the analysis of the data in this study. The chapter begins by discussing perspectives on leadership pertinent to this investigation into the role of vice-principal. The two key perspectives examined here are instructional leadership and transformational leadership, which are used in policy discourses to frame the work of the new vice-principals in their new leadership role. I also explore some concerns which exist surrounding the labeling of leadership types. Next, I discuss conceptualizations of the transition process. This section explores the idea of change and transition and its impact on the human experience, especially in regards to the transition to educational administration. Classroom teachers undergo a personal and professional transition as they enter their new job as vice-principal. There are several stages new administrators encounter as new school leaders must cope with the realities of their new job and their new identity beyond the classroom. There are sociological and psychological constructs that can be used to explain how the new leaders adapt to their role change. There is a socialization process that occurs and several stages new leaders go through to transition into their new role. The socialization process and the stages of this socialization are also outlined as part of the framework in this chapter. There are a number of circumstances and individuals which can influence the socialization process. The transition from classroom teacher to vice-principal is not simple and this chapter outlines the complexity of the entire process.

Leadership Perspectives

At the turn of the 21st century, a number of research studies have shown that "there is an increasingly important debate around the idea of moving from the view of leaders as the product of individual characteristics to seeing leadership as collective, shared potential in the organization" (West-Burnham, 2004, p. 1). Both the definition of leadership and leadership practice are ambiguous as leadership, leading and leader are increasingly used interchangeably (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008; Newton & Riveros, 2015). There are many descriptors, or labels attached to the ideas surrounding leadership, leading, and leader (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008, Mulford (2008). "That is, a variety of labels have been used to position those who are 'leaders' or who 'exercise leadership' in a position whereby their decisions and actions have an impact on

those who are led" (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008, p. 331). There are many leadership practices or strategies which school leaders can utilize and implement in their schools.

Instructional leadership. One of the key areas of leadership practice for vice-principals is instructional support (Barnett, Shoho and Oleszewski, 2012, Hallinger, 2005).Hallinger (2005) introduced the idea of instructional leadership as a means to address the focus on performance and standards in today's education system. The current role of principals as instructional leaders focuses on curriculum, which is the forefront of many reform initiatives. According to Harris (2005), instructional leadership

> firstly, equates leadership with agency focusing upon the relationships among people, hence crossing organizational boundaries; secondly, is not simply being about role or function but rather as a dynamic between individuals within an organization; thirdly, is primarily concerned with improving instructional practices. (p. 82)

From this perspective, instructional leadership reflects the actions directly related to influence teaching and learning in the school setting. In Harris' (2005) words, instructional leadership "invests in capacity building by developing social and academic capital for students and intellectual and professional capital for teachers" (Harris, 2005, p. 83). Also, according to Hallinger (2005), "the effective instructional leader was able to align the strategies and activities of the school with the school's academic mission. Thus, instructional leaders focused on not only *leading*, but also on *managing*. Their managerial roles included coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction" (Hallinger, 2004, p. 4).

Transformational leadership. Transformational leadership practices are used by vice-principals to work with, and develop, staff capacity to improve school goals. While much of the emphasis on educational reform has been on student achievement, Shields (2010), examines the broader contextual elements of leadership. Shields (2010) argues that, "transformative leaders recognize that the end of education is not only private good and individual achievement but also democratic citizenship and participation in civil society" (p. 583). Focusing these imperatives in the current climate of accountability and standardized testing is not easy, but it is possible to improve schools through transformational leaders using "the key values of liberation, emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice shine through their words and practice" (Shields, 2010, p. 583). Similarly, Gunter (2001) acknowledges that

> It seems that transformational leadership is less about educational leadership than leadership in educational settings. The particular demands of teaching and learning do not seem to shape its purpose, and the practice of it is not educative for leaders and led. Transformational leadership isn't really transformational at all but is a 'top-dog theory' that meets the needs of management control. (p. 98)

Transformational leadership focuses on the growth of the staff and building their capacity to achieve school goals. "Increased capacities and commitments are assumed to result in extra effort and greater productivity" (Leithwood&Jantzi, 2006). Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999) identified six dimensions of transformational leadership:

- Vision and goals
- Culture
- Structure
- Intellectual stimulation
- Individual support
- Performance expectations.

The work of Leithwood is also reflected in Ontario's Leadership Framework as it focuses on setting directions, developing people, building collaborative cultures, and staffing the program. Transformational leadership means the school leaders work collaboratively with staff members and inspire them to learn and grow in order to be committed to achieving school goals. "Transformational approaches to leadership emphasize emotions and values and share in common the fundamental aim of fostering capacity development in higher levels of personal commitment to organizational goals on the part of the leaders' colleagues" (Leithwood&Jantzi, 2006, p. 204).

A critique of transformational leadership is relevant when studying the challenges facing new vice-principals during their transition to the new job because, according to Mulford (2008), transformational leadership has been promoted as one of the more powerful ways to approach school leadership (p. 41). However, the idea of transformational leadership presents an appealing perspective of leadership that does not necessarily reflect the reality new vice-principals face as they transition into their new role.Mulford (2008) also notes the importance of school leaders adapting and adopting practices in order to meet the needs of changing contexts. A specific leadership theory or heroic accounts of leadership do not do justice to the work of leaders in

schools. The work new vice-principals do is far more complex.

Concerns with labels. Hallinger (2005) argued that leaders in education have been characterized as, strong, directive leaders, culture builders, goal-oriented, charismatic, experts, and managers which "tended toward the heroic view of their capabilities that often spawned feelings ranging from inadequacy to guilt among the vast majority of principals" (Hallinger, 2005, p. 4). Hallinger (2005) followed March (1978), in asking "if the heroic model of leadership even fit the long-term needs of schools, which were, in the final analysis, large bureaucratic organizations" (Hallinger, 2005, p. 12). Mulford (2008) also argued against using adjectives to label manifestations of leadership: "Any single one-size-fits-all or adjectival approach to leadership, or checklists of leadership attributes, is superficially attractive but will limit, restrict and distort leadership behaviour in ways not conducive to school development and improvement" (p. 48). According to Gutherie and Saunders (2001) another relevant leadership issue needing to be addressed is that "education leaders face neglect – in low quality training and professional preparation they receive, currently with little support, and even outright hostility from politicians and other stakeholders. The result is a shortage of people willing and able to lead our public schools to improved academic performance" (Normore, 2004, p. 108). Normore (2004) goes on to suggest that "school leaders are being held more accountable than ever for assuring that students meet new learning standards, but frequently lack the resources, the support, training and authority at a school district level to achieve results" (p. 108).

Schools are highly structured organizations. Fitzgerald and Gunter (2008) noted that, as a result of the organizational structure, there is a power imbalance between the leaders and those they lead.

> This power differential is acutely played out in schools precisely because the very nature of the organization places some adults in hierarchical positions to others and all adults (whether teaching or non-teaching staff) in authoritative positions relative to students. This orthodoxy is reinforced by the ways in which leadership is shaped and determined by national policy agendas, irrespective of national context. (Fitzergerald& Gunter, 2008, p. 332)

These findings echo Hallinger's (2005) conclusions according to which, principals have always been expected to perform many roles, such as political, managerial, and instructional roles. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, there was an "infatuation with performance

standards [that] has become a global love affair" (Hallinger, 2005, p. 2). Normore (2004) also examines the ability of school leaders to meet current leadership challenges. "School administrators are feeling the effects of the public's changing expectations in the push to adopt new and expanded administrative roles, including those of accountable instructional leaders, constructive political leaders, and responsible managers" (Normore, 2004, p. 107).

The focus for principals became accountability and school improvement. "Given the passage of formal government standards for education through the world, principals who ignore their role in monitoring and improving school performance do so at their own risk" (Hallinger, 2005, p. 2). The Ontario Leadership framework, outlined in the policy section, is a pertinent example of this trend towards the rapid adoption of leadership standards. Eacott(2013) presents the Australian context stating, "there is a clear message being presented: there is a desire to improve student outcomes in schooling" (p. 95). He also notes that "principals and school leaders [are] seen as a key driver of this desired perpetual improvement" (p. 95).Eacott (2013) utilizes the term "the game" and linking it to leadership and that leaders are either successful or effective through measures of student achievement, which is part of "the game". "The underlying assumption is that leadership is a means through which to bring about a better future, achieved through the manipulation, read control, of the forthcoming" (Eacott, 2013, p. 96-97).

Conceptualizing the Transition Process

Transitions are a part of life and certainly occur when a teacher leaves the classroom to enter the office of vice-principal. Petch (2009) suggests that

> Transitions are of course a regular occurrence across an individual's lifetime. The majority of people move from childhood to adulthood and from education to work: many will move into relationships, parenting and grandparenting; will move in and out of the labour market; will experience ageing and possibly physical moves and transitions in health status associated with that age. (p.1)

The transition should be considered a process rather than a single event as those involved in the transition require an adjustment period (Petch, 2009). The transitional process is not simple and straightforward. Experiencing a transition may create anxiety and stress as the new vice-principal faces the unknown (Petch, 2009). Armstrong (2009) further explains the transition they face:

> the transition from teaching to administration often appears to outsiders to be a

> straightforward change in roles and responsibilities, new assistant principals…tell a
> different story. They describe a complex psychological passage that extends beyond a
> change in physical locations and duties. (p. 4)

She describes the transition as a social, emotional, cognitive journey that impacts people personally and professionally (p. 4). The transition experienced by the new administrators is a public event due to the number of stakeholders involved. "New assistant principals' transitions are also deeply embedded within the larger sociopolitical context of the particular school and district culture, and the demands of the professional role" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 4). When it comes to the transition from teacher into an administrative role Normore (2004) acknowledges;

> The transition from being a teacher to becoming an administrator is an intricate process
> of reflection and learning that requires socialization into a new community of practice
> and role identity. This process requires an investment of time and costs to ensure that
> there is a careful balance of knowledge and development through classroom activities,
> and skills development through situational learning activities and opportunities guided by
> qualified professionals. (p. 109)

In order to truly understand the experiences of new administrators, it is imperative to understand the concept of change and transition. "Change can happen at any time, but transition comes along when one chapter of your life is over and another is waiting in the wings to make its entrance" (Bridges, 2001, p. 16).

Bridges (2001, 2009) argues that change and transition are two different concepts. He explains that it is not the change that people struggle with, rather it is the transition. "*Change* is situational: the move to a new site, the retirement of a founder, the organization of the roles of the team, the revisions to the pension plan" (Bridges, 2009, p. 3). Bridges (2001) states that this situational shift is not interchangeable with transition. "*Transition* on the other hand, is psychological; it is a three phase process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about" (Bridges, 2009, p. 3). Going through a transition requires people to let go of what once was in order to embrace the new. "Without transition, a change is mechanical, superficial, empty. If transition does not occur or if it is begun but aborted, people end up (mentally and emotionally) back where they started and the change doesn't work" (Bridges, 2001, p. 3). Sometimes people resist transition because it is too hard to let go of the "piece of ourselves that we have to give up when the situation has

changed" (Bridges, 2001, p. 3). In order to successfully make a transition, one must leave the old situation behind.

Often, organizations, such as school boards, overlook the letting go process and do not address the feelings of loss that exist. This means letting go of an old identity that you had before the change occurred, such as a classroom teacher. Bridges notes that for transition to occur, there must be an ending. For example, when a teacher leaves the classroom or school for an administrative job, he or she must let go of the old peer group. "They weren't peers anymore, and the kind of work you really liked may have come to an end when you shifted to managing your old peers who still did that kind of work" (Bridges, 2009, p. 7).

There are three phases people go through when facing transitions – ending, the neutral zone, and the new beginning (Bridges, 2009). "Once you understand that *transition begins with letting go of something*, you have taken the first step in the task transition management" (Bridges, 2009, p. 8). Once you let go, you are in the second chaotic, creative phase – the neutral zone (Bridges, 2001, p. 2). The neutral zone is that space between the old identity and the new. During this time the way of doing things in the past is gone, but doing things the new way is still uncomfortable (Bridges, 2009). It is important to take time through the neutral phase in order to renew one's self. "The neutral zone is thus both a dangerous and opportune place, and it is the very core of the transition process" (Bridges, 2009, p. 9). Transition is part of the life's journey and part of personal development.

> Reorientation, personal growth, authentication and creativity; What these four things all
> have in common is that they all require that you let go of the way you have experienced
> your work and yourself. When you've done that, you drift for a while, open to the
> insights and the promptings from your own inner voices. (Bridges, 2001, p. 39)

Bridges (2001) clearly outlines the three processes and reiterates the need for all three phases in order for transition to work.

- In the ending, we lose or let go of our old outlook, our old reality, our old attitudes, our old values, our old self image. We may resist this ending for a while.

- Next, we find ourselves in the neutral zone between the old and new – yet not really being either the old nor the new. This confusing state is a time when our lives feel as though they have broken apart or gone dead.

- Finally, we take hold of and identify with some new outlook and some new reality, as well as new attitudes and a new self-image. When we have done this, we feel that we are finally starting a new chapter in our lives. (p. 6)

These three processes are necessary to "reorient and renew people when things are changing all around them. You need the transition that they add up to for the change to get under the surface of things and affect how people actually work" (Bridges, 2009, p. 9). The transition process needs to be managed carefully in order to ensure future success. The only way to reorient and renew oneself, requires going through the transition process and letting go of the past and accepting the new (Bridges 2001). Transitions can be positive and bring new knowledge, skills, and friendships that have the potential to change our lives and impact careers (Bridges, 2001, p. 47).

The transition to administration. New administrators encounter several stages as they transition into their new role. "When someone leaves a subgroup, such as teaching, and becomes part of management, such as educational administration, there is a change in the socioemotional reality that must take place" (Sigford, 1998, p. 5). She argues that there are stages to overcome and coping skills that new administrators must adopt before transitioning to the new identity. Sigford (1998) likens the change process to the grief process Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1969) presented which focused on terminally ill patients and the five stages of grief their families and friends go through. "In any major change, be it professional or personal, there is a growth process that one must go through to resolve the feelings and redefine the self" (Sigford, 1998, p. 7). Sigford (1998) argues that new administrators go through five specific stages of change as they transition into the new position. The five stages are: 1) denial, 2) anger, 3) bargaining, 4) depression, and finally 5) acceptance.

In a professional change, such as a promotion, the first change lasts about 3 to 6 months. If this change is a promotion, the first stage feels like euphoria. If it is a lateral move or demotion, the person in this stage may feel numb. (Sigford, 1998, p. 8).

In the *denial* stage, there are many new things to learn and many new realizations. "One new realization is that the title of *administrator* has more credibility in the eyes of the students, parents, and staff. The position itself carries more authority; people assume that if one has the position, one has more knowledge and skills" (Sigford, 1998, p. 8). There is a sense of

excitement during this stage because everything is new; however, as Sigford (1998) points out, the newness and excitement tends to mask some of the difficulties which lie ahead. Amongst the feelings of excitement are feelings of "sadness that a person feels in leaving a known support group and identity in leaving teaching to become an administrator" (Sigford, 1998, p. 8). When transitioning to an administrative role, the teacher must give up their old identity as they forge ahead to create a new sense of self. "Another part of the denial stage is that most people, when leaving teaching, still think of themselves as teachers. They do not believe they are different from when they were teachers" (Sigford, 1998, p. 9). However, as the new administrator takes on the new role and begins to make difficult decisions, an emotional distance between teachers and the administrator begins to take hold (Sigford, 1998, p. 9).

The difficult decisions vice-principals have to make along with the possible differences of opinions between teachers and administrators may lead to the next stage of change, *anger,* which could also be viewed as frustration. Not so long ago the new vice-principals were teachers and their staff members could have been their colleagues, so issues may arise when the vice-principal is forced to hold teachers accountable for their actions and ensure that they follow policies and procedures. "It is a startling realization for a new administrator the first time there is a difference of opinion with teachers. As an administrator, one expects differences of opinion with parents and students but is startled with the number of times it happens with teachers" (Sigford, 1998, p. 9). Administrators are responsible for overseeing the operation of the school, whereas teachers must oversee their classroom. It is the job of the administrator to keep the teachers accountable. "Dealing with staff issues is one of the most difficult parts of being an administrator. As a former teacher, one expects teachers to do their job and do them well" (Sigford, 1998, p. 9-10). When administrators must intervene to hold teachers accountable, it may cause a sense of disillusionment, along with frustration, and anger (Sigford, 1998, p. 10). Sigford (1998) states that anger is part of the change process; it is important to acknowledge these feelings as part of the "*evolution* from teacher to administrator, and not a *result*" (p. 10).

The third stage, following anger, is *bargaining*. In this phase "one begins to develop coping strategies and methods of improving the position" (Sigford, 1998, p. 10). This is where the new administrator starts to develop strategies that will lead to self-improvement, as well as strategies to improve interactions with other stakeholders. Developing new strategies are key as "some of the external remedies [are] necessary to build a new internal definition of self. No

matter how someone defines the issues within a school and tries to remedy them, the bargaining becomes part of the process that must be completed for a new self-identity to be realized" (Sigford, 1998, pp. 10-11). According to Sigford (1998) it is during the fourth stage, *depression*, that teachers contemplate leaving administration in order to return to teaching or to another related career. This stage "may be disguised as frustration, exhaustion, and stress. It may be characterized by self-doubt" (Sigford, 1998, p. 11). These feelings are normal towards the end of the second year. It is a necessary stage in order to move into the final stage, acceptance. "The final stage, *acceptance,* becomes apparent when one realizes a feeling of pride and satisfaction over an administrative accomplishment. There is a feeling of satisfaction in making a difference in the lives of students, of making change, of creating something new" (Sigford, 1998, p. 11). During the acceptance stage, the new administrator no longer takes differences from staff, students, or parents personally and is able to handle the situation. According to Sigford (1998), at this stage, administrators accept that they are no longer part of the teaching realm and accept their new position.

Transition and socialization. Making transitions in the workplace is not a simple process, in fact it requires change, learning, and creating a new identity along with the new role.

> Career theorists acknowledge the interrelationship between the individual and his or her context, and they integrate sociological and psychological constructs in order to explain how organizational newcomers adapt to or are motivated to adapt to professional and/or organizational role changes. (Armstrong, 2009, p. 16)

Being a teacher and changing your career to become a principal or vice-principal requires one to gothrough a transition. "Becoming an innovative principal or assistant principal is not a passive process in which others are solely in charge of your learning. Rather it is a process in which you contribute significantly to your own learning" (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 261). Matthews and Crow (2003) and Armstrong (2009) view the transition into administration as a social passage that the new administrators undergo through a socialization process, in which learning the new role occurs. Matthews and Crow (2003) define socialization as "a reciprocal process in which both organization and individual are active participants in professional learning" (p. 263). The new learning involves seeing one's self in a new role with new responsibilities beyond the classroom.Matthews and Crow (2003) suggest that new administrators are involved in two types

of socialization – role taking and role making. "Role taking is a form of replication which occurs when new assistant principals enact their assigned administrative script in a custodial manner" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 22). Role taking tends to preserve the status quo, whereas "role making highlights the interpersonal and active nature of role construction" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 23). Role making allows new vice-principals to make modifications, which fit their beliefs and expectations, to the typical assigned role.

> Role taking, which is a more passive process, involves accepting the responsibilities and mission of a role that are defined primarily by the way things have been done in the past. As an administrative intern, you are learning how principals, teachers, district supervisors, and even students define the role and how you are expected to enact it. Role making, in contrast, is a more active process that emphasizes molding the job to fit your perspectives, values, and expectations, as well as the school's needs. (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 262).

The researchers note that both of these roles can occur simultaneously and are present with any new role. As a new vice-principal, it is necessary to learn the expectations others have of you, however the new vice-principal will also be able to create his or her own vision of the job based on personal perspectives and values (Matthews & Crow, 2003). Role taking and role making lead to understanding the socialization process. Socialization must first be understood from the school or school board's perspective" (Matthews & Crow, 2003), meaning the new vice-principal learns the appropriate values, norms, beliefs, and skills that meet the goals and needs of the school or district. The second perspective regarding socialization focuses on the individual experience. The new vice-principal brings their own belief-set, teaching experiences, leadership training "about how schools should be learning environments, and other personal goals and needs. These elements create your own expectations for the role. You also bring to this socialization process learning tools that have worked for you in the past" (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 263). Armstrong (2009) argues that "assistant principals are socialized to be boundary spanners and buffers between the school and the external community, bridging a variety of competing roles and stakeholder interests, dealing with ongoing safety threats, and protecting the technical core of the school" (p. 23).

According to Matthews and Crow (2003), there are three sources of socialization for school leaders: professional, organizational, and personal. They suggest that professional

socialization and the role of the administrator are influenced by outside expectations: "Becoming a principal or assistant principal is influenced by the expectations that the larger society in general and university training in particular communicate regarding how to enact the role. These influences emphasize the patterns of values, beliefs, and assumptions that have gown up around a role" (p. 264). The next major influence on the socialization of the new principal or vice-principal is what happens when you first enter into the leadership role. "Becoming an innovative school leader is also influenced by sources that occur when you enter your first school as an assistant principal or principal. At this stage, the more generic skills and administrative perspective learned during university training are reinforced, modified, and expanded as principals and assistant principals learn how things are done here" (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 265). Within the school, the students, teachers, and parents all influence the socialization of the new principal and vice-principal. These key players help to shape the way the new administrator sees him or herself (Matthews & Crow, 2003). Finally, the personal socialization stage is how friends and families influence the new principals and vice-principals. "Family members and friends can be critical sources of support for encouraging role conceptions that involve more innovative images" (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 266).

Past studies focused on socialization tend to emphasize the work of principals and authors tend to generalize these findings and apply them to the assistant principal (Armstrong, 2009). Armstrong suggests that, though principals and vice-principals may share similar duties, the socialization process for vice-principals is unique because "their socialization impacts differ because of their relative status in the administrative hierarchy and the different types of power and privilege that are vested in these two roles. As subordinates to the principal and as front line middle managers, assistant principals are subject to different socialization influences" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 17). Several distinctive features of the vice-principal's socialization can, in fact, be identified (Matthews & Crow, 2003). The first involves the *content of socialization*, which acknowledges the dual nature of the vice-principal job. "One image is a limited vision of the role that emphasizes primarily student management and maintenance of order" (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 274). This includes developing skills to deal with difficult students and unpredictable situations. "The second image of the assistant principal's role is a more expanded one in which the role is enlarged to support instruction of all students" (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 274). This involves becoming an instructional leader and working with teachers

collaboratively to improve student achievement.

Sources of Socialization. There are three sources of socialization for new vice-principals (Matthews & Crow, 2003). One of the key sources of socialization for new vice-principals is the principal. "The principal will influence your socialization in three major ways: assigning tasks, creating role images, and providing support. The principal almost certainly will determine the tasks you are assigned" (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 274). The principal is key to the support of the new vice-principal as they can have an overt impact on the new vice-principal or may affect them in a subtle manner. The principal helps to create the role image of the new vice-principal.

> These images include what receives attention in the school environment; the nature of the relationships with teachers, students, and parents; issues of control and authority; and what gets rewarded and punished. For some principals, the image of the role of administrator involves an autocratic and distant relationship with teachers and students. For others, school administrators are facilitators and learners rather than autocrats and controllers. (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 274-275).

The principal may also influence the socialization process by offering support, advice, and encouragement. Often, the principal becomes a mentor to the new vice-principal (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 275).

The second source of socialization for new vice-principals is teachers. This relationship can be complex. "Teachers can reinforce or balance the role images presented by the principal" (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 275). The new administrator may struggle as he or she senses a gap between themselves and their former teaching role. The students also play a significant role in socializing the new vice-principal; traditionally, the role has centred on relationships with students; "the literature seldom acknowledges the powerful socializing role played by the students" (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 275). Students assist in the socialization process as they reinforce the image of authority. Finally, the new vice-principals themselves play a role in their own socialization as they bring their own personalities, experiences, backgrounds and beliefs to the role (Matthews & Crow, 2003).

The stages of socialization. Armstrong (2009) and Matthews and Crow (2003) outline the stages of socialization that new principals or vice-principals experience. Armstrong (2009)

argues that four stages of socialization exist, whereas Matthews and Crow (2003) believe there are three; however, the first three stages are the same. The four stages of socialization according to Armstrong (2009) are:

1. Anticipatory
2. Encounter
3. Adjustment
4. Stabilization (p. 19).

 The first *anticipatory socialization stage*, is where the "pre-arrival and preparation occurs prior to the new administrator's placement in the school when he or she is learning about the assistant principalship and rehearsing for the role" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 19). Matthews and Crow (2003) elaborate on this stage stating, "during the anticipatory stage, you are meeting new administrators or new sources of socialization that may have different views of the role than what you have experienced so far. At this stage you are acquiring information about how the larger society, your university professors, and your internship mentors view the role" (p. 266). This is the pre-entry period where professional development providers can facilitate a smooth entry, transition, and role adjustment (Armstrong, 2009, p. 19). The next stage is the *encounter socialization stage.* At this stage the new vice-principal goes from being a complete stranger to a newcomer. Armstrong (2009) notes that this could be a period of happiness and excitement; however, "as you acquire new information about the school and the expectations of its constituencies, you are likely to experience 'reality shock' as the expectations you developed earlier during teaching and internship conflict with the expectations you encounter in this first school" (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 266). How the new vice-principal responds to their reality will depend on their personality, past experiences, and the availability and support of those around the new administrator (Matthews & Crow, 2003).

The final stage according to Matthews and Crow (2003), and the third stage according to Armstrong (2009) is the *adjustment socialization stage.* "Fitting in and becoming an insider are critical tasks of the Adjustment stage" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 19). In this stage the new vice-principal acquires enough knowledge and information to move from a newcomer to an insider.

Frequently this is the 'privileged information' that only a few people in the organization possess but which permits learning the tasks, interpersonal relationships, and values of the new setting. In this stage the principal or assistant principal resolves the issues of the

> encounter stage and becomes an inside member of the organization. (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 267)

During this final stage, new administrators have a more realistic sense of their role (Armstrong, 2009).

  Stabilization is the final stage outlined by Armstrong (2009); at this stage "the newcomers are socially and psychologically located within the organizational context" (p. 20). The new vice-principals are modelling the organizational norms and tend to demonstrate personal and organizational effectiveness (Armstrong, 2009). This is also the stage where vice-principals may feel as though they have enough experience and confidence to apply for the principal pool. When it comes to the stages of socialization, Armstrong (2009) suggests that "educational stakeholders are unaware of the methods they use to socialize newcomers and are not aware of how they impact new administrators" (p. 22). She concludes, "whether conscious or unconscious, organizational socialization practices regulate assistant principals' transitions, and they define a number of technical, moral, and political tasks that novices are required to master in order to be accepted within the school culture" (Armstrong, 2003, p. 22). When aware of the impact of the socialization process on the transition from teacher to vice-principal, schools and school boards can act to do more to support new vice-principals as they move into the new role. "It is clear that the kinds of socialization practices new assistant principals encounter have a formidable impact on their transitional passages and the leadership pathways they choose" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 24).

Conclusion

  In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the theoretical framework. The framework examines the various conceptualizations of leadership used by new vice-principals to enhance educational reform. The reviewed studies reveal that administrators are expected to be instructional leaders, providing support to teachers and co-learning with peers in order to enhance student achievement (Lee, Kwan, & Walker, 2009). Vice-principals are also expected to align strategies and activities with the board and schools' goals and mission statement (Armstrong, 2009, 2010, 2015; Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012). New leaders are also expected to be transformational leaders, as they must meet the needs of changing contexts (Leithwood&Jantzi, 2006). Vice-principals must lead and manage; it is a complex job. This

framework outlines the diverse roles vice-principals encounter once they enter the new job.

This chapter also outlines the meaning of change and the transition process that new vice-principals go through. The transitional process is not simple, but is quite complex and individual (Bridges, 2001, 2009, 2013). The process requires a lot of learning and reflection. Transition is how people deal with change. There are three phases of transition, ending, neutral zone, and renewal. The transition into administration also encompasses a number of stages such as: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. A new administrator must experience these stages, even if only for a brief period. Along with the transition process, new vice-principals experience a process of socialization in the new role. The transition involves role taking and role making. Leaders also encounter three sources of socialization: professional, organizational, and personal. The principal working with the new vice-principal plays a significant role in the socialization of the new vice-principal. Teachers, students, parents, friends, and family also influence the socialization process. The four stages of socialization are anticipatory, encounter, adjustment and stabilization. New vice-principals encounter each stage as they transition into their new role, but each candidate has their personal experiences. It is important that stakeholders, such as schools and school boards understand the complexity of the transitional and socialization process in order to support new vice-principals in their new role.

The works of Sigford (1998), Petch, (2009), Armstrong (2003 & 2009), and Bridges (2001 & 2009) provide the framework which will be used to analyze and interpret the experiences of eight new vice-principals. These studies also help to conceptualize the notion of change, transition, and the stages of socialization new vice-principals encounter. There are stages of transition and socialization which overlap during the journey into the vice-principal's role. During the transition stage of denial there is new learning and new realizations, as there is in the anticipatory stage of socialization. Both the anger stage and encounter stage reflect the realities of the job, although the encounter stage may bring some excitement as opposed to the frustration linked with anger. During the depression stage a new vice-principal may consider leaving the role to return to teacher, whereas the fourth socialization stage is adjustment, meaning possessing knowledge of the job and moving towards becoming an insider. Perhaps the depression stage precedes adjustment. Lastly, the final transition stage of acceptance and the final socialization stage of stabilization overlap as they reflect pride and confidence in the new role. The three phases of transition: ending, neutral zone, and renewal, can also be linked to the four stages of

socialization. The transitional experience and the socialization process will reflect the journey of eight new vice-principals in the rural context. It is within this context that the vice-principals' leadership perspectives will be examined and analyzed. Chapter 5 will further explore the process teachers undergo as they transition into the vice-principal role in a close-knit rural community.

Chapter 4

Methodology

Type of Study

This research is a *qualitative case study* (Patton, 2002). Patton (2015) explains that qualitative inquiry "typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases, selected for a quite specific purpose" (p. 264). Qualitative research allows themes and categories to emerge from the data collected. "The value of qualitative research lies in the particular description and themes developed in context of a specific site" (Cresswell, 2014, p. 203-4). Specifically, the case study approach selected for this study reflectsa specific situation and the life experiences of the participants:

> "...case study research allows a researcher to study phenomena that are not easily or appropriately studied by other research methods. A case study research method is appropriate when the researcher wants to answer a descriptive question (e.g., what happened?) or an exploratory question (e.g. how or why did something happen?)" (Gay, Mills, &Airasian, 2012, p. 445).

The case study also allows for "close collaboration between the researcher and the participant, while enabling participants to tell their story" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545). Yin (2014) suggests case study allows the researcher to focus on a ''case' and retain holistic and real-world perspective" (p. 4), in this case the experiences of teachers transitioning to the vice-principal role. More specifically, this study adopts an *exploratory* case study approach. "The exploratory case study investigates distinct phenomena characterized by a lack of detailed preliminary research" (Streb, 2010, p. 2). Yin (2014) states that the purpose of an exploratory case study is to identify research questions or procedures that may be used in a subsequent research study (p. 238). The broad concept of exploratory case study "provides the researcher with a high degree of flexibility and independence with regard to the research design as well as data collection" (Streb, 2010, p. 2). Exploratory case studies are useful in the study of social phenomenon (Streb, 2014).

Gathering data through interviews is common when conducting case studies (Tobin, 2009; Yin, 2014). "Rigorous qualitative case studies afford researchers opportunities to explore or describe a phenomenon in context using a variety of sources" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544). Baxter and Jack (2008) emphasize the need to use multiple lenses to ensure that multiple aspects of the phenomenon are explored (p. 544). "Case studies are a design of inquiry found in many

fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, of one or more individuals" (Cresswell, 2014, p. 14).

Binding the Case. A case is defined as, "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 25). Yin (2014) provides a "twofold definition – covering the scope and features of a case study – shows how case study research comprises an all-encompassing method – covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis (p. 17). More specifically, Yin (2014) states that the first part begins with the scope of a case study:

1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that

   - investigates contemporary phenomenon ("the case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when

   - the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evidenced. (p. 16)

Conducting case studies allows a researcher to "understand a real-world case and assume that such an understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions pertinent to your case" (Yin, 2014, p. 16). This research endeavours to analyze the transition rural classroom teachers make into the vice-principal role in one small rural school board in Southwestern Ontario. The research is bound by the policies and procedures of this rural school board. The research is also bound by the Ministry of Education's Education Act when it comes to the duties and responsibilities of a vice-principal. Finally, this study focuses on new elementary and secondary school vice-principals, male and female, who have two years or less experience in the leadership role. Case study inquiry "copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and…relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion" (Yin, 2014, p. 17).

Sampling and Data Collection

To learn more about the transitioning experiences of new rural vice-principals, the study includes interviews with both elementary and secondary school leaders who have been in the role of vice-principal for two years or less, within the rural school board, not necessarily within the same school, in order to get a broad range of perspectives. The reason to include participants

with two years of experience or less was because this school board allows a new vice-principal to be in an "acting role" for the first year, thus remaining in the union. So, the vice-principal is not considered a "regular" vice-principal until he or she leaves the union at the end of the first year. Interviewing those with experience of two years or less ensures they are new to the role. Armstrong (2009) also interviewed new vice-principals with experience ranging from three weeks to two years. In her research she found that at the two-year point one of the new vice-principals "experienced a shift which she connected to her increased familiarity with school culture and her assistant principal duties and routines. She believed she was at a stage where she had mastered the tasks of the assistant principalship" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 52). The size of the school board allows for a representation from both panels: elementary and secondary. I interviewed a group of new vice-principals, using purposive sampling (Gay, Mills &Airasian, 2012) that is, selecting the participants based on specific criteria, such as the two years or less standard as new vice-principals within the rural school board who were former classroom teachers.I used a purposeful sample size using my judgement "based on expected reasonable coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study and stakeholder interest" (Patton, 2015, p. 314). A randomized strategy was not used. "The purpose of a purposeful sample is to focus case selection strategically in alignment with the inquiry's purpose, primary questions, and data being collected" (Patton, 2015, p. 264).

My sample had specific criteria, which needed to be met: Participants needed to be new to the vice-principal role within the last two years. During the first year in this school board, new vice-principals are on probationary contract as "acting vice-principal", opening the interview pool to those in administration for the second year permits the inclusion of vice-principals who have completed their first year as "acting" vice-principals, allowing analysis of their experiences during the probationary period. I was hoping to interview approximately 12 new vice-principals. Twelve interviews were deemed appropriate given the small size of the rural school board where there are 31 elementary schools, nine secondary schools, and one online school. There are 40 schools within my study area. However, I only had 11 eligible participants, and only eight responded and agreed to participate in the research study. Eight was a sufficient number of participants as it allowed me to collect an adequate amount of data and reach saturation (see below) of themes during the analysis. Patton (2015) notes that the sample size can be flexible, and in the beginning, in the initial planning, "a desired or targeted sample size may be specified.

That sample size can be a starting point" (p. 313). Sometimes, as in this study, the sample size needs to be refined based on recruitment and availability of participants. A detailed profile of all participants is included in chapter 5.

According to Saumure and Given (2008), the limited number of participants within this clearly identified context would make data saturation easier to accomplish. I explored only the themes that presented saturation with the eight participants:

> Saturation may be achieved more quickly if the sample is cohesive (e.g., if all participants are members of a particular demographic group). In this case, one is not trying to make the theory transferable to the general population, where great variability is likely to exist and more substantial data collection may be needed. Second, theoretical sampling is key to achieving saturation quickly. Here research participants are selected so that the resulting data help to build and validate the emerging theory. (Saumure& Given, 2008, p. 196)

Identifying themes and patterns in the data collected must proceed and continue in order to contribute to the research until nothing new is learned; at that point saturation has occurred.

Semi-Structured Interviews. This research data was collected via qualitative interviews (see appendix 4). "Interviews yield direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge" (Patton, 2015, p. 14). During the interview it is imperative that the researcher record the interviewee's perspective (Patton, 2015, p. 471). More specifically:

> In qualitative interviews, the researcher conducts face-to-fact interviews with participants, telephone interviews, or engages in focus group interviews with six to eight interviewees in each group. These interviews involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from participants. (Cresswell, 2014, p. 190)

Van Manen (2001) suggests that the interviewer needs to be strongly oriented to the research question so one does not get carried away with questions that go nowhere and everywhere. The dialogue must stay close to the experience as lived by the interviewee. Seidman (1991) cautions against using the interview as a vehicle for the interviewer's agenda. The interview must be an exploration of the interviewee's experiences. Seidman (1991) suggests the interviewer ask only "real questions" where the interviewer does not anticipate a response. Van Manen (2001) also

notes it is not necessary to ask too many questions. Patience, silence, and repeating the last response may be a more tactful way of gathering experiences and information. My interviews are shorter case study interviews. "Rather than occurring over an extended period of time or over several sittings, many case study interviews may be more focused and only take about 1 hour or so" (Yin, 2014, p. 111). These shorter interviews are much more conversational and likely to be open-ended. During the interview, I began a conversation with each vice-principal regarding his or her experiences as new leader in a rural area and at their particular secondary or elementary school. I then build the interview around his or her experiences, realizing that each interview will be different for each vice-principal. The questions were open-ended to encourage interviewees to explain their perspectives, while, I as the interviewer, listened for and watched for cues, such as repeated thoughts, themes, or reflections that illuminate the participant's understanding (Hatch, 2002). "Those open-ended questions are the heart of qualitative data, and they emerge from asking open-ended questions" (Patton, 2015, p. 446). Open-ended questions allowed participants to respond in their own words. Patton (2015) acknowledges that "a good interview feels like a connection has been established in which communication is flowing two ways" (Patton, 2015, p. 467).

Data Analysis

"Data analysis in qualitative research will proceed hand-in-hand with other parts of developing the qualitative study, namely, the data collection and write-up of findings" (Yin, 2014, p. 195). In qualitative case study research it is possible to analyze the data throughout the research process. Analyzing data means scrutinizing it and organizing the information "in a dependable and accurate manner and leads to the presentation of study findings in a manner that has an air of undeniability" (Gay, Mills, &Airasian, 2012, p. 465). Each interview was thoroughly analyzed, as the purpose was to "integrate and synthesize interview responses from throughout the interview into a coherent story" (Patton 2015, p. 443). Qualitative research "is an inductive process of building from the data to broad themes to a generalized model or theory (Cresswell, 2014, p. 65). Cresswell (2014) suggests that the researcher collect the data from participants and then organize this information into categories and themes, which are "then developed into broad patterns, theories or generalizations that are then compared with personal experiences or with existing literature on the topic" (p. 65). Organizing themes into patterns or

generalizations suggests varied end points for qualitative studies (p. 65). It is essential that the researcher validate the findings. "Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures" (Cresswell, 2014, p. 201). When it comes to qualitative data, it is important to determine whether "the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account" (Cresswell, 2014, p. 201). There are a number of strategies that can be put in place in order to ensure validity of the data.

Trustworthiness of the research context

Case study research uses multiple data sources to enhance credibility and validity of research (Patton, 2015). Using data from multiple sources allows the researcher to analyze the process rather than study each source independently (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A.K. Shenton (2004) notes the need to address dependability of research by ensuring the process of the study is reported and allows the reader to review the research process. This study is "interested in deeply understanding specific cases in a particular context (Patton, 2015, p. 684). Each data source in this study contributes to the understanding of the experiences of new vice-principals. In this study the aim is to "offer perspectives rather than aiming at singular truths and linear predictions" (Patton, 2015, p. 684). As a result, I ensure that I allow time to build sound relationships with my interview participants and spend time with them to ensure "respondents all contribute to trustworthy data" (Patton, 2015, p. 684). This research method also ensures credibility. Russell, Ploeg, DiCenso, and Guyat (2005) suggest strategies to further support trustworthiness of data: have a clearly written research question, an appropriate case study design, purposeful sampling strategies, collected data is managed and analyzed correctly so the validity and credibility can be improved. This study has a clear and purposeful research question and research design using an exploratory case study. The study also used explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria along with purposeful sampling, which increases the credibility of the study. Through the analysis stage, reviews conducted by my supervisor, member checking, and my own reflection helped to ensure the trustworthiness of my research study. Transferability is another strategy to ensure trustworthiness. The findings of this qualitative project are specific to a specific area and population (Shenton, 2004, p. 69), however the conclusions and findings may be transferable to other rural contexts or to the experiences of new vice-principals in other school

boards.

Document analysis. Bowen (2009) noted that"like other analytical methods in qualitative research, document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge" (p. 27). I analyzed pertinent documents such as the Ontario Leadership Framework, the vice-principal appraisal process and other relevant board documents such as policy and procedure memorandums. This analytical process requires the researcher to be patient and reflective. Bowen (2009) explains that this analysis of the data yields key excerpts, quotations or passages that can be organized into themes and case examples (p. 28). I looked for recurring themes, ideas, thoughts, or topics in the documents in order to analyze them and then compare the information in the documents to data collected during the interview process. When reviewing relevant documents, along with interview data, the researcher is left with a lot of information requiring analysis. "Qualitative data analysis is based on induction: The researcher starts with a large set of data representing many things and seeks to narrow them progressively into small and important groups of key data" (Gay, Mills &Airasian, 2012, P. 466). I narrowed down the data set by identifying key pieces of information, trends, and themeswithin both the relevant documents, which outline the expectations of vice-principals on the job with what the vice-principals reveal during the interview process.

Bowen (2009) elaborates on analysis and cites Denzin (1970), who said: "document analysis is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation – 'the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (p. 28). Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012) explain that triangulation means using several research methods, data collection strategies, and data sources in order to have a full idea of what is being studied and to verify information. "By examining information collected through different methods, the researcher can corroborate findings across data sets and thus reduce the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study" (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). Triangulating the data, using document analysis along with the interview information will ensure the validity of the research. **Triangulation of data.** This research study uses data triangulation, which is the constant comparison of several data sources to ensure trustworthiness and credibility of the data. Patton, (2015) states, "triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. This can mean using

several kinds of methods or data…" (p.316). Triangulating the data is necessary in order to ensure "that the research findings accurately reflect the situation, and 'certain' in the sense that research findings are supported by the evidence" (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011, p. 1). It is imperative that researchers triangulate data in order to check and establish the validity of the research study. According to Bryman (2011), "triangulation refers to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings" (p.1142). Using a number of data sources increases the credibility of the research study. In this research study, in-depth participant interviews were conducted and then analyzed, along with relevant provincial, Ministry of Education, OLF, and OPC documents. As Patton (2015) notes, "the point is really to *test for* such consistency" (p. 317). This research study also used *member checking* to ensure the accuracy of the data and the qualitative findings. Member checking ensures qualitative validity as it involves the researcher "taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate" (Cresswell, 2014, p. 201).

Through the various data sources, I aimed to make meaning of the data collected during the research process. However, data analysis was not left until all data are collected; "the qualitative researcher begins data analysis from the initial interaction with participants and continues that interaction and analysis throughout the entire study" (Gay, Mills, &Airasian, 2012, p. 466). I constantly analyzed the data throughout the collection process; it is this process and reflection that "leads to the collection of new important data and elimination of less useful data" (Gay, Mills, &Airasian, 2012, p. 466). Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012) note that it is important to avoid premature actions and conclusions based on early analysis and interpretation of the data collected (p. 466). The case study also calls for the researcher to be reflective during the process of data analysis (Stake, 2005). "Qualitative data analysis requires the researcher to be patient and reflective in a process that strives to make sense of multiple data sources…" (Gay, Mills, &Airasian, 2012, p. 465).

The data sources used in this research study were field notes I made during and after the interview. These notes reflected my immediate thoughts, feelings, concerns, or questions regarding the interview and the process. The most significant data sources were the transcribed, and coded interview transcripts. Along with the interview transcripts and field notes I used the Ontario Leadership Framework as a source of information as well as the Ontario Ministry of

Education's Education Act. I noted the similarities between what my interview participants stated with the relevant provincial documents, but I also noticed contrasting information between the interview responses and the other documents.

Ethics Approval

I interviewed fellow vice-principals within the school board where I am currently employed. From the school board, I reached out to vice-principals hired between 2013-2015 and contacted potential participants in person or through email. Accessing participants was critical to my research and it was done in amanner where the participants felt as though they had a say in their involvement, having an opportunity to withdraw from the study at anytime. Miller et al. (2012) acknowledged that gender and/or race/ethnicity might play a role in the power dynamics that exist between me, as a researcher, and with the participants. Being a female colleague of the vice-principals may influence the responses of the male and/or female participants based on institutionalized gender dynamics. All participants in the study were white. As will be noted later in the analysis, there is little racial diversity in the rural school board where the study was conducted.

The ethics process ensured that I obtained "informed consent" before conducting the interviews. Miller et al. (2012) argue: "obtaining 'informed consent' at the start of a project should not mean that it does not have to be thought about again" (p. 71). As an ethical researcher, I must ensure I self-reflect throughout the entire research process. Issues surrounding consent and reflection are significant as I conducted research within my own school board and interviewed my colleagues. In order to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of my sources, It was essential that I concealed the names, school locations, and any other identifying information to protect the participants from harm or punitive action (Patton, 2015, p. 341).

Participants were also provided with a letter of information outlining the purpose of the study, inclusion and exclusion criteria, possible risks, benefits of the study, stating that participation was voluntary, and anonymity will be provided. Each participant agreed to, and signed a letter of consent agreeing to participate in this research study. The eight participants willing to be interviewed confirmed via email and we met at mutually agreeable time and location (e.g. the office at their school). All of the required documents, as well as the ethics approval certificate from the Western Research Board are included in the appendices A-D.

Chapter 5

Analysis

In this chapter I provide an analysis of the responses to the interview questions from the eight participants. All participants were new vice-principals who moved from teacher to administrator within rural schools in one rural school board. This chapter focuses on the transition these participants experienced and how they were influenced by their rural context. Their voices provide insight on how teachers make the transition into a new administrative role, the challenges faced on the journey. The analysis highlights the need to critically explore the process teachers undergo as they take on the new vice-principal job. In a rural community where farms, towns, and villages are spread out, school becomes a community focal point and the administrators become key actors in the community (Ashton & Duncan, 2012).

The review of the literature on rural educational leadership reveals the importance of appreciating the close-knit rural community and need to understand the educational challenges that come with working in a small, rural school district (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009). Also, as noted in the theoretical framework, the work of Sigford (1998), Petch (2009), and Bridges (2001 & 2009), provide a framework for interpreting how the experiences for a small group of rural vice-principals affects their transition into the leadership. These authors provide a conceptualization of change and transition, both of which new vice-principals encounter. Petch (2009) and Bridges (2001 & 2009) argue that transitions are a part of life.Sigford (1998) relates the transitional experience directly to the role of a school administrator. The eight vice-principal participants offer insights into the pathway to leadership, the importance of on the job support, the importance of developing relationships, along with significant ideas about leadership within the rural school and school board. Most importantly, their perspectives address the specific rural context and the unique issues facing the schools and school board. I also draw on DeRuyck (2005),Fitzgerald and Gunter (2008), Hallinger (2005), Normore (2004), West-Burnham (2004), and Wallin (1999) to understand the different elements of leadership in connection to the administrative role. The works of these authors provide a theoretical framework for understanding the specific dynamics of working in a rural community and leading a rural school. Matthews and Crow (2003), in conjunction with Armstrong (2009), explore the socialization stages that new vice-principals journey through, thus their research is key to analyzing the interview data.

Interview participants talked about their experiences prior to administration, such as their teaching assignments, leadership experiences, education and training, along with the actual transition. Each participant also outlined the importance of having a supportive principal and other people they could call on for advice. Most also mentioned their role as a vice-principal is to provide support to the principal, staff, and students. These relationships were of significant importance to the new participants, whether they were being developed with staff, students, parents, or the school community. Along with these relationships, there is always a managerial side to the vice-principal's duties. The participants expressed their views on their personal approach to leadership and what could be done, in their opinions, to develop, recruit and retain new administrators. Finally, the interview participants expressed their concerns when it came to working in the rural context.New vice-principals outlined issues they faced such as isolation, geographic limitations, and lack of resources.

Each vice-principal has a distinct voice with a story to tell.The main purpose of this chapter is to highlight the voice of each participant and utilize the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 3 to analyse the interview data. The chapter is structured in the following manner. First, I introduce the eight vice-principals who participated in this study.Next, I identify the six specific themes: the pathway to administration, on the job support, job description, building professional relationships, rural issues, and leadership development. Within each theme there are also a number of sub-themes which emerge as well.The subthemes explored in this chapter are:

- Leaving the classroom
- Leadership training & leadership experience
- Describing the transition
- Principal support
- Networking
- Duties as assigned
- Key role in the school
- Professional relationships in the school
- Community relationships
- Isolation
- Benefits of the rural setting

- Rural sensibilities

- Understandings of leadership practice

- Recruitment and retention of leaders

Participant Profiles

In this section, I provide some details about each of the eight participants in this study, along with some details about their rural context. It describes the school, their prior teaching assignments, and the length of time as a vice-principal. These profiles will assist with reading and understanding the data as it provides some personal context of each interviewee.

Melissa:

Melissa is a vice-principal at a kindergarten to grade six school with approximately 500 students and 30 teachers. The school is located in a small town with a population of approximately 3000 people. Melissa explains, "*before becoming a vice-principal I had a variety of teaching jobs. I have taught in a junior classroom; I have taught in high school.*" Melissa came to this rural school board from a different school board. At the time I interviewed Melissa she had completed her first two years as vice-principal.

Katie:

Katie has just completed her first year in the vice-principal's role and was beginning the second year in her new role. She describes her school as "*a small rural school in a small town*". The town has a population of just over 4000 people. She describes the small town as a "*little old fashioned in some of the beliefs held by the community and by that I mean, conservative ideas about what school should look like and not a very diverse population at all*". She is the vice-principal at a grade 7-12 school that has approximately 500 students and 35 teachers. As a teacher she taught a number of different subjects before entering into administration.

Jason:

As a new vice-principal, Jason worked at a full-service kindergarten to grade eight elementary school with approximately 300 students and 20 teachers. He had just completed his second year in the role. Prior to administration, he taught junior over the course of 15 years. He basically taught all subjects. To set the context he acknowledged that the key issue in the rural community was a "*fairly broad range of socio-economic…not much in the way of cultural, religious, you know, any of that kind of diversity, but it's a fairly broad spectrum of socio-*

economic that we managed."

Michael:

At the time of the interview, Michael was still in his first year in the new role of vice-principal. He describes his school as being "*a large school, we have a very diverse population, a wide variety of learners, you know I would say probably about average in terms of behaviour issues; it is a busy school, but it is a great school.*" The school is a grade 7-12 school. In total there are approximately 1000 students at this school and 70 teachers. The students at Michael's school are predominantly rural students who are bussed into the school each day. Immediately before taking on the vice-principal role, Michael was teaching physical education and he was the special education resource teacher.

Richard:

At the time of our interview, Richard had only been a vice-principal for less than a year. He is a new vice-principal at a kindergarten to grade eight school that has approximately 400 students and approximately 40 teachers. He explains that the school has "*been here for almost 50 years; it's a country school, lots of great kids.*" The school is located outside of a rural village and is not situated in a town setting. Prior to his new job, Richard taught in the primary, junior, and intermediate divisions, mainly in the junior division He also taught special education for three years.

Julia:

Julia describes her kindergarten to grade eight school as a "*mixed population in terms of socioeconomics; it is very homogeneous in terms of the cultural aspect because we are a rural school board. It has diverse needs in terms of special education, in particular, behaviour.*" The school has approximately 400 students and 20 teachers. It is situated in a town with approximately 9000 inhabitants. At the time of our interview, Julia had been a vice-principal for less than one year and she entered into this rural school board from another school board. Immediately before becoming a vice-principal, Julia was a special education resource teacher in a kindergarten to grade six school. Prior to that she was in the junior division for eight years and before that role she was a special education resource teacher in three different schools.

Jill:

Jill was in her first year as a vice-principal when I interviewed her. When asked to describe her school, she replied, "*so I work in a rural school with 100% bussing.*" There are

approximately500 students and 30 teachers at this school, which is located on the outskirts of a small village and not situated in a town. It is in the country. Jill came to this rural school board as a vice-principal from an outside board. Before entering the new role, Jill taught *"many grades from kindergarten up to grade eight. In the last five years, my area of specialty was mostly early literacy as a resource teacher, primarily for the last four years."*

Linda:

Linda is a new vice-principal in a small town with 3000 people. At the time of our interview she had been in her role for less than a year. Her school has approximately 300 students and 20 teachers. She explains, *"we do have some higher needs at the school. Our socio-economic situation is lower. And we, that does manifest itself in some ways; you know, parents struggle sometimes to support the students and we acknowledge that and understand it."* As teacher, her focus was on literacy and she taught grade 6.

Pathway to Administration

Leaving the classroom

"Work has a central place in adult life and in shaping individuals' identities" (Fouad &Bynner, 2008, p. 241). For three of the eight interviewees, transitioning from the role of teacher into an administrative role as vice-principal was not something they initially planned when they entered education. Jill explains,

> it was my decision at the end, but it was nothing I ever dreamed of doing. I thought maybe I have something to offer and I became curious, and just started looking into it and then basically decided that I will cross those bridges as I got there, and the door is open so I just kept on learning.

Like Jill, Linda took advantage of the doors that opened for her on the path to the vice-principal's office. *"I wasn't highly motivated to go for administration, but I went for PD [professional development] and it was awesome"* (Linda). Richard credited gaining some experience in the administrative role as teacher in charge (TIC) for leading him into an administrative role. He states, *"I didn't get into teaching figuring I want to do this, but it's kind of grown into that role for me, so teacher in charge was a big part of the decision to pursue this part of it."* These three vice-principals demonstrate Petch's (2009) assertion according to which "transitions are of course a regular occurrence across an individual's lifetime" (p. 1).

Many of the other participants cited their desire for change and the new challenges the vice-principal role brought with it. Katie explains:

> *I have a keen interest in change, and I would say that probably…you know that was my mindset in the classroom, I was always trying to persuade people to try something different, the things I was trying to do and so I felt I would have a greater impact on seeing some of the change, and change based on what research says, change not for the sake of change, but to impact kid's lives in a positive way.*

Katie reflects a leader who chose to enter administration in order to improve the education system and student achievement, which resonates with Harris' (2005) observation: "in the US, Canada, and Australia there has been renewed interest in school leadership fuelled by widespread belief in the potential of headteachers or principals to deliver improved educational outcomes" (p. 73). Similar views were expressed by other participants, Julia also sought the vice-principal job, but as a change in her own career path. "*I have been teaching for almost 30 years and I really needed a change, and new challenge, and I felt like I have tackled everything that I wanted to from a teaching perspective*" (Julia). Michael shares this sentiment and states, "*I was always interested in administration. So the change factor, as well as I got a taste several years ago of administration through teacher in charge and really liked the role. So, I decided to pursue it.*" Michael also acknowledged that his father, who was also a school principal, was a great influence for him. Melissa described her reasons for making the transition to administration as an opportunity for personal growth. Although the participants desired change, which according to Bridges is situational, what really occurred was a transition, the psychological process "that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that change brings about" (Bridges, 2009, p. 3).

As teachers, the participants suggested their decision to leave teaching for administration could also be influencedby their work experience within their schools, as part of various teams and committees, and the opportunity to see the "bigger picture". Melissa talks about sitting at the student success team with special education teachers, student success teachers, administration and guidance and exclaims, "*when I saw the way adults were collaborating behind the scenes and really fighting for kids…I didn't know what my administrators did all day and thought, 'this is amazing work.'*" For her, this was the turning point in her decision to move into administration. For Melissa, the decision was also influenced as she was laid off at a different

school board after seven years, so she pursued becoming a principal with the rural school board in this study. Jason also began to grasp the bigger educational picture. He started "*to have conversations with my administrators in two different buildings about bigger picture stuff and got a little more involved in school planning, and some school improvement planning and working through that process.*" Jason was on a number of school committees and district committees. He explains his decision to enter the vice-principal role,

> *to be honest, I was kind of tired having to plan for those leadership tasks, and also plan for my classroom, and I really like those leadership tasks, and I felt that was the next step for me, the next direction I wanted to go. That is when I decided to go in that direction.*

These teachers were beginning to see their role extending beyond the classroom and into administration. In Sigford's (1998) words, "an administrator, however, has a different framework. She or he must maintain a global perspective" (p. 5).

For Julia, the decision to move into administration was a long time coming as her personal life played a key role in the decision making process.

> *I always had it in the back of my mind, and kept pushing it to the back, thinking I wasn't ready, and probably I wasn't. And then life gets in the way as well, and so in terms of my home life, things weren't, I felt in a spot where I could leave the classroom, so even though I have been thinking about administration for a long time, I felt that if I am going to make the move, I need to be able to devote the requisite amount of time, to me it is sort of like being a parent, the first you have to be there. And when my mother was ill and she had a stroke, I knew I couldn't be there, boots on the ground, because my attention was divided.*

Fouad &Bynner (2008) outline contexts for transitions, "people are constrained from the time they are born by such structural factors as gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and geographical location" (p. 245). Julia's decision to move into administration from teaching earlier in life was constrained by her personal and familial situation. Richard also had underlying factors influencing his decision to move into teaching and ultimately administration. Richard was in management at McDonald's when he attained his university degree and decided to become a teacher. He elaborates by saying, "*I always talked about doing the teaching side of things, just finally decided that was the right time to act on that, I am happy that I did that.*"

Leadership training and leadership experience

The leadership training and leadership experience each candidate obtained was fairly uniform. Each of the eight candidates have either completed part one, or parts one and two of the Ontario Principal's Qualification program (the details of this program were explained in chapter two) along with obtaining either a Master's Degree or a double honours specialist, which is a pre-requisite for taking the principal courses. Half of the candidates also took an Aspiring Leaders course through the school board. Richard comments, "*I did the Aspiring Leaders program, which most of us do.*" Michael thinks he "*was probably in those for a couple of years.*" Both Julia and Jill completed the Aspiring Leaders program with their former school boards. Jill informed me, "*I joined Aspiring Leaders for three – four years.*" Jason did not complete the program despite it being a viable option, "*I didn't take advantage of the Aspiring Leaders work, which was the stuff that the board puts on to be able to, you know, support new vice-principals, and people who are hoping to go into the role.*" Jason preferred to reach out to other colleagues or people he knew were already in the role or new to the role.

Acting as a teacher in charge (TIC), filling in for the vice-principal or principal when they are away, was another way a number of new vice-principals got a taste for the role. Richard. Linda, Katie, and Michael each gained experienced as TIC. Richard states he "*did a lot of teacher in charge work for the past four years anyway, kind of enjoyed that aspect of it.*" Michael was being the TIC so often that he somewhat fell into the role.

> *You know what I think happened was, because I was doing the TIC role so much, I think one year I was over 40 days…like 40 times, not full days. 40 times in the office and I was sort of heading that direction anyway. That's when things started to change*" (Michael).

When she was in a regular classroom, Linda also "*did a bit of teacher in charge.*" Katie also acted in the role of teacher in charge, "*but not very often*" and now that she is full-time in the role she admits that when it comes to gaining experience being TIC that "*teacher in charge isn't the same, now that I have been in the role and I look back at my other experiences, I would have to say virtually none.*"

Katie cites other informal leadership opportunities at the school and system level as benefiting and developing her leadership experience. Jason explains that he gained leadership experience through other means. "*As far as administration goes…I was the district chair for the, on the committee for the district sports committee, district sports council for the elementary*

panel, some leadership roles that way, but not necessarily administration by any means." Many of the other new vice-principals believe their experiences as the special education resource teacher (SERT) contributed to their leadership skills and led to the administrative path. Michael, Richard, Jill, Julia, and Melissa, were all the SERTs at one point before entering the vice-principal role. Julia states,

> *I feel the SERT was really good preparation because there was so many administrative tasks, and also it requires a view to the whole school. So I felt that was good, although it wasn't official administration preparation, you do get a different view of things because you are in and around the office more.*

Jill corroborates this sentiment, "*being a resource teacher you do a lot school-wide activities and I did a lot of leading in terms of like, in resource you do a lot of spec. ed. leading and then I also did leading through committees*." Melissa agrees, "*so when I worked in the high school as the special education teacher, I had the opportunity to be on the student success team. And that was a real learning opportunity and turning point for me because up until that time I didn't really know what my administrators did*." Gaining a lens for the role of administrator and leadership experience helps with the transition as it is a process. As Petch (2009) argues, transition is a process, and not an event, rather it is a period of adjustment. When teachers take on leadership roles and responsibilities they have already begun to enter the transition process. They are beginning to come to terms with change.

Describing the transition

Sigford (1998) acknowledges that when people face any major change in life, personal or professional, "there is a growth process one must go through to resolve the feelings and redefine the self" (p. 7). In her research, Armstrong (2009) notes that "the assistant principals' narratives suggest that administrative passages are made up of complex social and psychological dimensions that shape personal and professional roles and practices" (p. 55). The eight vice-principals each described their transition to leadership. Some described it as "*smooth*", whereas others described it as "*fast and furious*". It is during this time that the vice-principals are "letting go of the old ways and the old identity people had. This first phase is an ending, and the time when you need to help people to deal with their losses" (Bridges, 2009, p.4). According to Bridges (2009), during this phase the eight participants are in the ending, losing, letting go phase

of transition (p.5). This transition phase, according to Matthews & Crow (2003), is also known as the *encounter socialization stage* when the administrator goes from stranger to newcomer and responds to their new reality. Jason, Michael, and Jill all state that their transition from teaching to leading was smooth. Jason comments,

I think it was relatively smooth. I think there were days certainly when there were a lot more days that I was exhausted at the end of the day, a lot more I was frustrated at the end of the day, a lot more days left sort of scratching my head wondering what I was going to do next kind of thing.

Despite the frustration and exhaustion, Jason still believes his transition went smoothly. Michael did not elaborate on his thoughts and simply stated, "*I would say smooth, again it goes back to what I was saying earlier; it was pretty much smooth.*" Jill also agrees that her transition into the leadership role was smooth, but for different reasons.

I would say smooth. My first day of work, it was a snow day. I arrived to the office, my new beautiful office by myself and [the principal] didn't even make it. I had jeans on because I know there's no kids. And the third day was a school day and the kids made it.

Jill was quietly able to ease into her role.

Richard had mixed feelings about his transition. When asked to describe his transition from teaching to leading, he responded,

I guess because I am coming to a new school, it's been a mixture. It sort of blends itself together, in that coming to a new school I am learning how that school was run in the past, what families were like, but I think, overall the transition itself was pretty good, but my preparation for it was relatively short.

Linda also mentions the importance of being given time to ease into and prepare for the role. Regarding the transition, she states,

It was fine. I am still teaching, so, and the…yeah, I have been given time and emotional space to work my way into it and so it hasn't been that stressful that way. The day to day can be quite busy and you can go from you know seven in the morning, till five at night and forget you haven't eaten (laughter), so that sort of thing. I would say it has been very positive.

Despite being positive about her transition, Linda's comments reflect Michael's sentiments regarding the busyness of the new job.

Katie is not as positive and does not see everything as being fine or smooth. She described her transition as "*lonely*." In fact, she goes on to say

> *So, I feel like a dog, like they have taken me out to a farm because they don't want it anymore and they are just assuming it is going to be fine. There are things that I just don't know, and so then I am calling and asking them as they come up.*

Melissa and Julia's thoughts are more in line with Katie's experience. Melissa described her transition as "*fast and furious*" and "*pretty quick.*" She felt that she was lacking in experience because she never acted in the TIC role. Julia described her experience, "*it was abrupt because I left teaching in December and walked in here as an administrator, as a teaching administrator on the 5th of January, so it was definitely abrupt.*" She goes on to describe her job, "*it is a really demanding job physically, emotionally, as is teaching, but it has another layer to it, in that you are maybe a little more, you are because you are more isolated because you don't have the same relationship and friendship.*" Despite this "*abrupt*" and "*isolating*" experience, Julia still believes that her transition "*was as smooth as it could be, given the constraints.*" Notwithstanding the variety of new vice-principal experiences, the overall consensus is that the transitions were "fine' or "smooth" despite encountering some stressful scenarios and feelings.

Armstrong (2009) would argue that the new vice-principals were nearing the end of the socialization stage of their transition and were in the third stage, adjustment (p. 19). During this phase "the newcomer's ability to adjust is influenced by individual, organizational, and social factors such as personality characteristics, levels of support such as mentors and supervisors, job characteristics, and group dynamics" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 19). Their transitions are described as "smooth" or "fine" because adequate supports were in place to ensure a successful transition and they took on manageable duties at which they were successful. Sigford (1998) would call this smooth transition "acceptance" (p. 11), which means "one realizes a feeling of pride and satisfaction over an administrative accomplishment" (p.11). At this point the new vice-principal is able to handle a variety of challenging situations and the disagreements with others, including teachers and students, no longer feel personal (Sigford, 1998, p. 11). Bridges (2009) argues, "situational change hinges on the new thing, but psychological transition depends on letting go of the old reality and the old identity you had before the change took place. Organizations overlook that letting-go process completely, however, and do nothing about the feelings of loss it generates" (p.7). These vice-principals successfully let go of their teaching role and embraced

the new vice-principal role and all the learning that the new role involves.

On the job support

Principal support

> School principals are often identified as a key source of influence because of their power to assign assistant principals' duties and to evaluate them. Principals also influence transitions by providing or denying support, encouragement, advice, and mentoring, as well as sponsorship for future careers. (Armstrong, 2009, p. 57)

All participants were asked about the on the job support they received in their new vice-principal role. Each participant discussed the important role his or her principal plays in their transition. When it comes to the transition and support, Linda thinks "*it really depends on who your principal is. I really, I think…I don't know, I don't have another experience, but this experience has been so positive, only because I feel supported by the principal. I think that is huge.*" Michael explains that he benefits from having both his principal and the other vice-principals to rely on;

> *I am fortunate to have very experienced people working alongside very experienced people. So [name] is my principal, and [names of vice-principals] all have extensive experience in the role. So along the way they are, often times, my frame of reference you know, if I need something or questions; I go to them.*

Jill has more of a formal approach to working with her principal, she states, "*This is my first job. I meet with [principal], we usually try to have meetings Wednesday mornings to catch up on the business of what's going on in the school.*" When it comes to principal support Richard's approach is much more casual. "*I have [principals name] and I, we talk as much as we can throughout the day, and after hours.*" This open approach seems to work for other new vice-principals, such as Linda, who feels totally supported by her principal. She exclaims,

> *[Princpal's name] is awesome! Right, he makes the time every day to answer questions that I have; he's transparent and upfront, and he is a huge relationship builder. He has good relationships with all staff members. And he reaches out to the community too, so I like that; so he is teaching me to do that. We learn as we go. He is very gentle and forgiving (laughter) and so there isn't the pressure of, you know, we worked hard, but if we screw up I know he has my back. So I learn with him, not being afraid to take risks*

and not being afraid to try some new things, so yeah, he's an awesome mentor.

According to Julia, it is this type of support that is necessary for new vice-principals. As a new vice-principal she outlines,

> *the other support that I was having is from the two principals that I have worked for here [names] and they have been very supportive as well, in terms of really helping to coach me, because I know I am just green as grass.*

This type of positive support from the principals towards the new vice-principals is significant for those transitioning into the role. Melissa explains that she received a lot of support and mentoring from her principal in the first two years on the job. She felt as though they were a team and that the principal was there to assist and guide her as a new vice-principal.

> Veteran principals can also wield a tremendous amount of power over newcomers because they possess the institutional knowledge related to the structure, culture, and technology of the school, the student body, and the various employee groups. However, in some schools, this information is sometimes withheld from newcomers as part of the administrative rites of passage. (Armstrong, 2009, p. 57)

Unfortunately, this seems to be the case in Katie's experience. When asked, "what type of mentoring or coaching have you received in your new role?", she replied, "*virtually none.*" Katie goes on to explain,

> *It is interesting that you are asking that question because I feel that since coming into this role, that I am less connected in terms of my own people doing the same work that I do, being able to share with those people, and learn from those people, and learn from colleagues. There is a lot of learning that actually happens from your colleagues, and from sharing with your colleagues.*

Katie attributes this lack of principal support to the fact that she joined a pre-existing administrative team, "*so they kinda had a relationship and an understanding of this school, knowledge of the students.*" This corroborates Armstrong (2009), "Administrative team dynamics can have a debilitating effect on newcomers who do not conform to the ethos of the team" (p. 57). Katie is also the only secondary vice-principal in this study. Jason was the only vice-principal who did not specifically mention the importance of having a supportive principal. Matthews and Crow (2003) argue, "other administrators, both inside and outside the school, influence the process of becoming a new innovative principal or assistant principal…principals

are a critical source of socialization for new assistant vice-principals through the tasks they assign and the images they portray" (p. 265).

Having the support of an experienced principal or mentor is vital to the success of the new vice-principal. Although there is not a lot of research focusing on the training of vice-principals, Rintoul& Kennelly (2014) argue "if new vice-principal candidates were provided opportunities to develop and demonstrate the required leadership skills, there would be significant benefits for school districts, schools, students, and the new vice-principals themselves" (p. 55-56). However, Rintoul and Kennelly (2014) also state that "authentic leadership needs to occur in a school setting where candidates are working with staff" (p. 56). The principal needs to be supportive of the new vice-principals and provide leadership opportunities and appropriate support. The eight interview participants stressed the importance of having a supportive principal and would appreciate a formal mentor program.

> Mentoring systems designed to provide new vice-principals with help are inadequate for supporting daily tasks. Mentoring has become a common practice for supporting leaders in education at all levels and holds significant promise as a means of developing leadership and management skills in administrators who are new to the role. (Rintoul& Kennelly, 2014, p. 60)

Principal leadership and mentoring is necessary to support new vice-principals as they transition into their new role. "Clearly, principals have the power to provide meaningful growth and development opportunities for their assistant principals, especially in building their capabilities to become future principals" (Barnett, Shoho & Oleszewski, 2012). Supportive principals provide a positive learning environment in which they encourage their new vice-principals to face challenges and take on new leadership opportunities. Supportive principals can assist new vice-principals reach the "stabilization stage" (Armstrong, 2009), where "newcomers are socially and psychologically located within the organizational context" (p. 20).

Networking

The vice-principals felt that networking was another crucial piece to successfully transitioning to their new the job. The participants felt that professional development and the networking opportunities that came with those learning experiences were beneficial. Armstrong

(2009) also found that when transitioning to the job networking was critical for new administrators. "Cultivating a network of reliable workers and supporters and demonstrating trust were described as critical to constructing interpersonal relationships (p. 109). Jill outlined some of the PD opportunities and networking activities she engaged in, "*last year there was quite a few activities we went to. We had a Critical Friends group where we had inquiry with the superintendent, so we could meet.*" Melissa cites the benefits of the vice-principal learning network, "*so for the last two years there have been vice-principal learning networks and that is an opportunity for vice-principals led by, usually led by, our superintendent to work through problems of practice following the Stephen Katz model.*" Michael set up his own professional network,

> *Well right from the get go, I set up, so that I am in frequent conversation and dialogue with [administrator's name] who is the 7-8 administrator over at [school name]. So that is very helpful in that he goes through, very similar experiences and he is very experienced in the role.*

Julia chooses to network with principals and vice-principals from her former school board, along with informal networks amongst other schools in the area. Other interviewees mention that conferences are great opportunities to network with other vice-principals.

Some participants suggested that more networking opportunities be offered in order to assist new vice-principals to better understand and undertake their new role. Jill would like to have the opportunity to attend a leadership camp with her colleagues, "*you can sign up and go to camps with a bunch of leaders, have a drink, sit around the bonfire, or go on hikes, spend long periods of time with other leaders – casually.*" Katie would also like to hear from other vice-principals and learn more about their experiences.

> *I would have valued having time carved out to hear from VPs who were newer to the role; even if it is three years, reflect on their first year, not even from our board, that would have been fine too. Because I know that in such a close board, there are things that you want to share, but you are kind of ratting out somebody, that is terrible.*

Katie would like to hear firsthand accounts from other new administrators so she could have a better understanding of her own experience and learn how others managed the transition. "Networks of fellow administrators can provide valuable support and encouragement for new principals and assistant principals, but they can also reinforce status quo images of the role"

(Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 265).

Job Description

Duties as Assigned

> Crossing the administrative threshold also exposed new assistant principals to different organizational perspective, and they were surprised to discover that the cognitive maps that they had developed during the first cycle from their teacher vantage point did not reflect their new location at the epicenter of the school community. In spite of the fact that assistant principals were experienced teachers who had worked in a variety of school settings, this view of the organizational landscape was startling in its depth and complexity and it led to feelings of dislocation and disequilibrium. (Armstrong, 2009, p. 77-78)

The job descriptions the participants outlined were very similar and there are many commonalities from school to school. The jobs outlined by the new vice-principals are "duties as assigned" by the principal. "Often, their work is determined by the specific needs of other school personnel, such as the principal and/or teachers (Barnett, Shoho, & Oleszewski, 2012, p. 93). When first entering the job and learning new duties, new vice-principals are in the encounter socialization stage, when the new administrators are learning the job. At this point they "acquire new information about the school and the expectations of its constituencies" (Armstrong, 2009) and it could be a 'reality shock' for the new vice-principal. "A new person coming into the principalship can be confused as to what is expected, what is needed, and what should be done" (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p. 1). As they work to fit in and become an insider, new vice-principals are in the adjustment socialization stage (Armstrong, 2009, p. 19). This is when the new vice-principal gains enough knowledge and experience to move from a newcomer to an insider and as new administrators they learn their role and duties.

The main duties, according to the interviewees, include being responsible for health and safety, medically at risk information, teacher supervision schedules, supply teacher scheduling, emergency response plans, and general knowledge of administrative procedures. Melissa shares her experience,

> *I am responsible for health and safety. [...] Safe schools, bullying prevention plan; I do*

the snack program. I do training for anaphylaxis, that kind of stuff, the medically at risk
forms. Those are the jobs that kind of fall to me to do and of course, run them by the
principal and get her signature, or whatever.

Jason also outlined a similar day filled with duties, the duties that were assigned were everything
from,

filling lunch, like snack buckets, making sure stuff was there, getting ice packs, doing first
aid for kids, looking after announcements, meeting with parents, resolving bus issues,
certainly working with students and teachers to promote positive environments in their
classrooms, yard duty, bus duty, crossing guard duty. I mean there is a plethora of duties.

Most participants listed similar "duties as assigned" by their vice-principal. The other
commonality was the emphasis on building relationships and ensuring quality communication.
Michael states, "*communication – making sure that I am communicating effectively with the*
school community, whether that is teachers, support staff, school staff in general, parents,
different agencies, and so on." These findings resonate with Barnett, Shoho, andOleszewski's
(2012) research. "Studies from around the world indicate their duties may include, but are not
limited to, resource and student management, teacher growth and development, classroom
observations, and instructional leadership" (p. 94).

Key Role in the School

When it comes to identifying what the new vice-principals see as their key role in the
school, "support" was the operative word. Matthews and Crow (2003) would describe this
supportive role as a mentor, meaning, "the principal takes a central role in helping individuals,
namely teachers and students to learn. The role of mentor is closely associated with the role of
teacher and coach" (p.12). The authors note that this is a fairly new conceptualized role. Jason
explains how he sees his supportive role,

Basically my job is to support learning in the school so whether that was, you know,
helping teachers with professional learning, like their own professional learning,
identifying problems of practice in their classroom, within their own practice, you know,
helping kids who have difficulties with learning, whether it is managing behaviour,
whether it is interpersonal stuff, they are having literally, that is getting in the way. Using
and managing technology, and then even working with the little guys; it's working on

self-regulation in all those things. But everything that goes into that, that helps support learning in the classroom environment or within the school, that is kind of ultimately under the umbrella. It is all about supporting and promoting learning in the building.

Katie concurs that her key role in the school is to provide support and suggests,

Support, it's all about support. I know some people would say discipline, but discipline is support, especially in a way that this is the situation. You are there to help those behaviours to stop, or to help support the teacher because it is impossible to teach when that is happening in the classroom.

Whereas Katie sees support as a way to address discipline issues, Richard addresses the key role of discipline because "*typically the VP gets the brunt of the discipline side of things; it's not the case here because I am not in the office a lot.*" He describes his role as doing what needs to get done and suggests as he gains more experience, "*my role is going to change over time, as I take on more responsibilities.*" Melissa also discusses the 'support' being her key role, however she refers more specifically to supporting the principal. Julia also makes reference to her principal when describing her key role in the school. "*Well, I would say my role I'm to be the right arm of [principal's name], my principal, to work as a team, to lead the school, to set direction, to move the ship forward. I want to be her partner in that.*"

Several other participants also identify their key role as being both a supporter and a leader. Jill was asked "what do you see as your key role in the school?" Her response started with

Probably to be a supporter and leader", but she focused on the role of leader. "If I have to pick one, you know I think [principal] is a fantastic leader, so he takes the leadership and the management, like full on. And I see myself as more of a supporter right now, to support people; if they have problems to kind of help solve them.

Being supportive and working as a leadership team is critical for Michael as well,

Well, obviously we work as a team and I know that I oversee 7-8s just in terms of the four of us as VP's working together to be leaders, to be visible. I don't want to say the backbone of the school, we…it is up to us to make sure that things are running smoother in here.

Linda acknowledges her role as an instructional leader in the school as she possesses an abundance of instructional knowledge to share, however she recognizes the need for new vice-

principals to "*take time*" because as a new leader you "*don't want to push that*".

Building Relationships

> The assistant principals identified learning to work with, through, and around individuals and groups as critical to their ability to navigate the social landscape. Building relationships was integral to this process, and it entailed continuously seeking out and developing reliable networks and alliances, which would facilitate their ability to manage schools proactively and to impose a leadership framework on their role. These relationships were developed through formal and informal interactions. (Armstrong, 2009, p. 108)

Professional Relationships in the School. Developing and building relationships is a component of the Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF). It is an expectation that all new vice-principals recognize this as an important part of the job. These relationships are needed to build the capacity of the teaching staff. It is deemed necessary to build relationships with teachers and other staff in order to have a professional and collegial work environment. After all, the new vice-principal will work closely with staff, especially teachers. However, Sigford (1998) explains, "it is very difficult to be friends with people whom one has to supervise and evaluate" (Sigford, 1998, p. 28). According to the participants in this study, building relationships is a significant piece of the vice-principal's portfolio. As part of the transition, the new vice-principals left their peer group behind when they left teaching. "With the job, you may have had to let go of your old peer group. They weren't peers anymore, and the kind of work you really liked may have come to an end when you shifted to managing your old peers who still did that kind of work" (Bridges, 2009, p. 7). Most of the new relationships with teachers and other staff are built within the confines of the school walls. The relationships with staff were deemed to be the most important. Developing relationships with staff was discussed in detail by all the interviewees. When asked, how are you developing relationships with staff, Jason explains,

> *That was actually one of the priorities for me because I really didn't know going into the role what it was that I was supposed to be doing, or trying to accomplish and I know the principal that I was working with initially tried to keep my responsibilities to a minimum, because I was still teaching a lot too. So, for me, it was about building relationships with*

> *the staff, so it was a matter of just trying to get into classrooms, get to know people, talking to people, asking questions, having them ask questions, and it seemed to be one of those things where I ask questions about things I truly didn't understand.*

Jason elaborated further stating he believed these conversations allowed teachers to share with him and help build a rapport with his staff. Melissa does not have an explicit plan or formula when it comes to building professional relationships with staff. She states,

> *I try to be friendly; I try to get to know people and their interests outside their job. You know, maybe where they have been in their career. This is a new school and so everyone has a story from how many years they taught here and everywhere.*

Julia has a more methodical approach to building relationships with her staff.

> *I want to do five things and I think I am doing two of them, but anyway, I want to validate their excellent work. I want to be sure they know they are appreciated. I want to co-learn with them. And I do that actively, for example, I am teaching kindergarten this year for the first time ever in my 30-year career, so I ask a lot of questions.*

She specifically outlines her priorities as she develops relationships: validate, co-learn, ask questions, and collaborate. Richard also thinks it is necessary to build those relationships and that "*it is getting out as much as I can*" and that "*just talking to teachers, supporting them*" is the key to the relationship. Katie says developing relationships with her staff has been "*great, they're wonderful here. I knew a lot of them coming into the building, but it is also something I have been focusing on, but it has come naturally than some of the contrived things that we are asked to do*." Armstrong (2009) argues "to some extent mentoring and supporting staff represented a form of resistance to socialization influences, where assistant principals were able to communicate their own vision and values to teachers and other members of the community" (p. 116).

As a new vice-principal, Katie has a positive outlook on the relationships she has built so far, "*I feel pretty comfortable. Yeah, I don't think there is anyone who feels uncomfortable talking to me and I don't have an issue talking with anyone else.*" Katie is in her second year as vice-principal and she addresses the issue of being an acting vice-principal year one and that still being a member of the Ontario Secondary School Teacher's Federation did have an impact on relationship building.

> *So, but last year, you are not supposed to, because you haven't left OSSTF yet, and then*

> *they are your colleagues and you are not supposed to follow through with any – to many*
> *– courageous conversations. This year already there had to be a few and it does change*
> *things a little bit. I am not feeling like that has been a problem at all.*

Michael has also had a success when it comes to building relationships, "*because it is my 10th*
year in this building, so I did have I would say, positive relationships with pretty much everybody
going into the role." However, Michael also notes as the new vice-principal that sometimes
decisions are made that make people unhappy.

> To build relationships with her staff, Linda focuses on listening to others.
>
> *I try really hard to just listen and feel where things are needed…I learned sometimes the*
> *hard way and it isn't in my nature. I am learning listening is always much better than*
> *trying to control the conversation. That is working fairly well for me; I listen very*
> *carefully.*

She also acknowledges that as a new administrator she should not jump in and change the ways
in which things are done. Being new to the role means, "*finding my path and just talking to them.*
What do you need? What is going on? And trying to be in the classrooms." Jill emphasizes the
need to collaborate as an excellent way to develop new relationships with staff. "*Last year I was*
leading collaborative inquiry groups with staff in the primary area, and that was wonderful to
get to know them." Jill also mentions that relationships are built when new administrators are
visible in the school hallways and classrooms. "All of the assistant principals expressed a
commitment to supporting students and staff, and they identified sustaining healthy relationships
as a critical factor in their ability to impose a leadership framework on their role" (Armstrong,
2009, p. 116).

Community Relationships. The new vice-principals are also in a position where they
have to build relationships with the community, which is especially significant given the rural
context. Linda provides some insight into this, "*When parents are involved I always touch base*
with either [principal] or [secretary], because there is always a history, right, so I want to know
before hand, is it negative or positive?" She also acknowledges the importance of meeting and
greeting parents as they drop off their children, as well as "*talking with parents when the*
students have issues." Linda, along with some of the other new administrators, also mention the
importance of attending parent council in order to build professional relationships with parents.

Melissa states, "*school council would be the first layer of school community and .[…] I attend all school council meetings alongside my principal and we have school volunteers*". As a new administrator Jason describes his experience as, "*I remember it being kind of weird and you felt like you were in a fish bowl a little bit; everybody knew who you were and you didn't know anybody*." He felt it took a year to get a "*good handle on parents and community members and people in the school and out of the school*." Michael and Richard both cite the traditional "open house" as a place to meet parents and develop community relations. Michael also notes that he tends to meet parents or contact parents for disciplinary reasons and several other interviewees noted this parental contact as well. As a new administrator, Michael recognizes the need to communicate school information with the community through websites, or newsletters. As for outside agencies, Michael is the only one who discussed the working relationship between administration and the Children's Aid Society. Julia is the only other participant to mention working with outside community agencies. Her school has an Ontario Provincial Police community officer liaison who works closely with the staff and students.

Katie and Jill each provided more details about their specific communities and their ties. Katie states,

> *I think my philosophy on school and community differs from my principals' to some extent. I really see the school as an extension of the community and I see, you know, I just grew up in a town like this. I understand the parents and the way and nature that they are involved and even if they are upset and…it just…it all makes sense to me because it is part of my schema. And so I think the opportunities to develop relationships with the community has been slim, because it isn't the nature of the dialogue between school and community currently right now.*

In her new role, Katie is working to involve the community in more school activities and events. Jill mentions that she thinks it is important to become involved with the community and attend community events, although, "*I am mindful too, I haven't done many activities in [town name].*" Like Linda, she mentions the importance of accessing the secretary as a source of information to learn about the community and its people.

Rural Issues

Isolation

Half of the new vice-principals interviewed identified transportation and/or distance as unique rural concerns and that these two issues often lead to a sense of isolation. Melissa explains, "*I would say transportation would probably be the number one issue facing rural families, especially families that are at risk or around the poverty line.*" She goes on to say that due to the distance between towns and schools, parents who do not have access to a vehicle are unable to access appropriate community supports and resources. Julia echoes this concern when asked, do you think there are issues you contend with that your urban counterparts would not have to deal with. She answers,

> *Isolation. There is not even a bus out in [town name], so I find the population, if they don't have good transportation, and that requires money, car insurance, gas, etc., [name of nearest urban centre] is one of the closest centres. I guess it's about 20 minutes to [nearest town]. It's that isolation, and I think in some ways the lack of various opportunities for youth. Yes, there are sports, but only if you got the money to pay for them. And I know there are programs to assist those kids, but I think it is the isolation and the lack of opportunities.*

Richard shares another concern with regards to being isolated in a rural setting and the limited opportunities for students. "*The only thing that I would see with that is would come down to more the field trip type of things.*" He explains that being in a town or city students can walk to parks and splash pads for field trips, but in his rural school it is not an option as bussing would be required to get to the amenities. Of course, costs and expenses are a concern. Jill also shares the transportation concern when it comes to bussing students to her school

> *Bussing is an ongoing issue, because of the bus company. Yet, they come to you with problems, so yeah, bussing is totally not brand new, but it is comprehensive because it is a 100% bussing, so if you have a weather issue or just communication, yeah it is complex.*

Richard also brought up weather concerns and bussing. "*Winter time has the potential to have more issues because if the buses don't run after school, you know if they get to school and the buses don't run, so there's all those issues*." Melissa re-iterates this sentiment, "*We lose school days because of winter weather for sure. That kind of goes with transportation.*"

Due to a sense of isolation and distance, most the interviewees shared a sense that they missed out on professional development and perhaps even career opportunities. Jill observed, "*professional development, like access to resources and professional human resources, the distance is big so I think there is less.*" Jill is the one vice-principal who also noted that distance impacts staff relationships as well.

> *Also, another thing is getting together as a staff, because people travel such distances it's hard to build that morale, and positive climate with staff. Because people are like, I just want to go home; I want to get home; I don't want to travel again. So those are big things.*

This lack of staff gatherings may impact the transition into the administrative role when it is already tough to be a new vice-principal leaving the teacher's social circle. The new vice-principal is still in Matthews & Crow's (2003) *encounter socialization stage* and facing the reality versus the initial expectations on the job. Julia notes that in order to network in a rural area that "*it is much tougher to do that, because everyone is so spread out. So that is one thing I think is different. Here in a rural community as opposed to urban; I am more isolated in my role.*" Melissa feels as though this rural isolation limits her job opportunities. "*Yes, there are limitations just getting where you need to go. […] Certainly we spend, with our jobs, I have a 40-minute commute in good weather. So an hour and a half of my day is dedicated to driving to and from work.*" Along with a commute, Melissa states,

> *Professionally, I live kind of centrally within [county name], but I couldn't go to [town name]; it would be too far based on where I live. It would just be too much, so yes that does present a professional limitation. Even if I lived in Toronto and wanted to take a subway to the Ministry I could do that, but that is not something that would be in the cards for me and my family.*

Jason also discusses his 40-minute commute, but as he points out,

> *We are fortunate because we tend to work close to our home-sites when we are teaching, because you make a choice, you make a transfer, do whatever that gets you there. You know when you are in the admin pool, and the group of administrators in the board, you are a little bit at the board's mercy. You go and you go.*

Benefits of the Rural Setting

Jill outlines the positives of being isolated in a rural community,

I like the idea that we are a little community and everybody here is important and it feels kind of safe. And anybody who drives here, it is not like they are driving through and dropping in, they really come for a purpose out of their way.

And although his school is in the country and they cannot walk to local attractions, Richard espouses the perks that come with being in a country school because "*we are very fortunate to have a lot of opportunities for outdoor classroom activities that other town schools don't because, you know, we have snow shoeing in the winter time, which is not something that a lot of schools can offer.*" Linda notes that students who grew up in a rural setting and on a farm "*have a different background schema than urban kids do.*" She also feels that living in a rural community enriches staff and students. Michael believes that living and working within the school board is beneficial. He feels as a vice-principal, because he grew up in the community and has family connections, that he has a certain advantage. It is a bonus to know the family and family situation, in order to "*be sensitive to student needs.*" Growing up in the rural community provides a unique perspective to the vice-principal and he understands school event such as "*tractor days*".

Diversity and Inclusion in the Rural Context

When it comes to rural sensibilities and understandings of the world, the majority of the interviewees noted that they were brought up in the rural community. Being born and grown in a rural community is an asset to understanding the dynamics of the rural context. The new vice-principals wholeheartedly believe that growing up in the rural area benefited them as they transferred into their new administrative role. According to Katie, "*I grew up in a town like this. I understand the parents…it all makes sense to me because it is part of my schema*" and "*I went to school with people with same, cross-section of people.*" Jill views having a rural background as positive because "*it is familiar, so I don't feel isolated or I wouldn't have come out here into the country, if I didn't love… I love nature; I love the fields and the smell and growing your own food. We have a John Deere tractor.*" Michael states, "*It undoubtedly would be a lot different to go to a community where you did not grow up in that community and you don't necessarily have perspective on families.*" Richard believes living in the rural community does help to understand the country versus town lifestyle and to recognize "*there are opportunities on both sides of*

things." According to Julia, having a rural background and knowing the way things work in a small town is beneficial in her new role, "*especially the social things that are available to you*."

In the rural context, life on the farm is valued. As a new vice-principal, Katie explains how it impacts her work and school,

> *There is a strong belief that work is a good reason to be out of school, whether it is working on your own farm or working. And no matter how often you say, legally you are supposed to be in school, somebody can't pay you to be somewhere else, work is valued. Not by every family, by enough families. Work is valued over school. And that might translate into a philosophy, none of this really matters, because he [student] already owns five acres and his own tractor and he is already making enough money to do whatever as well he works for his uncle and he works over here, and school is just because he has to.*

Michael shares this outlook on rural life, "*but I find sometimes the values, what it came to – I am speaking about farming in particular – that sometimes, and I get it, getting crops off in the fall took priority over school, so you get what goes on back on the farm. It trumps, you know, school.*"

The participants expressed their concerns regarding the lack of diversity in their rural schools. Diversity and inclusion regarding race, sexual identity, and religion are not overtly present throughout the homogeneous rural community. Katie elaborates,

> *There is not a lot of diversity, and I am fairly certain that an urban centre has more visible diversity than we have. That's just a little more widespread, closed mindedness about other cultures, other religions; it is not malice. If you never see, and you never talk and you never interact, and you never…you know, kids say: 'well I don't know any gay people'. And you are thinking, you probably do because they are in this building and it's just, it could be your best friend, but they are not out yet. They don't, they just haven't had the exposure.*

Melissa was the other new administrator that acknowledged lack of diversity in the rural context. She shares, "*we would not be anywhere near our urban counterparts with inclusivity when it comes to LGBTQ issues. […] I am in a K-6 school, so I can't really speak about the high schools, but I think you get more push-back from parents on things like that.*" Lack of diversity in a rural setting is a concern for some of the new administrators as they transition into the role.

Some of the new vice-principals are interested in having discussions regarding diversity and inclusion in rural schools, but are concerned they may face some opposition from the community.

Leadership Development

> Assistant principals represent a critical mass of middle managers and, in many cases, the future face of upper-level management. As on-the-ground educational leaders, assistant principals play a critical role in implementing operational directives and reform policies, shaping school culture and influencing student outcomes. (Armstrong, 2009, p. 121)

Understandings of Leadership Practice

When describing their leadership practices and philosophy, the interviewed participants used the term "style" when discussing their understanding of, and approach, to leadership. "Leadership, both in its definition and practice, is seductively elusive. Terms such as leadership, leading, and leader are used, often interchangeably" (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008, p. 331). And as Barnett, Soho, & Oleszewski (2012) note, the vice-principal role is often the first formal school leadership role that educators take on. Few of the interview participants were able to articulate specific understandings of leadership, such as instructional or transformational leadership. Most, with the exception of Jill, used various adjectives to describe their specific understanding of leadership. Jillalmost described herself as a "*transformational leader*" or nearing following a distributive leadership model, but backtracked on that statement:

> *I think my main style would be empowerment style or I wouldn't want to say transformative, but not…what's the one, transitional sort of like the dispersed, so I am not leading, and always looking for other people who want to lead and even trying to find those who think they can't and inspiring that.*

Jill is referring to distributed leadership. "Recently these calls for distribution (or delegation) of leadership across schools have been amplified, thereby increasing the number of adults who engage in leadership tasks and activities" (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008, p. 334).   Jason and Michael both described their approach to leadership as "*calm*". Jason answers,

> *I would say my leadership style is…style is interesting. I try to be as calm and, I don't know, try to be as easygoing as possible, as level as possible. It is one of those things that*

I think the hysteria would rub off on other people if you were feeling overwhelmed or feeling very busy.

Michael agrees with Jason's perspective. "*I think one of the things that I really try hard to do is to be a calm leader. I don't like, I'm a believer that how you react to situations is infectious*".Richard and Linda both focused on the relationship piece of their approach to leadership. Richard believes that his understanding of leadership involves a give and take relationship. "*I rely on the relationship side of things; it gets you through tough times. I just find there is a give and take relationship with the staff that you have to develop a bit.*" Richard compares this relationship to making a bank deposit that he can pull out later. He also feels that communication is his strength when it comes to leadership and his ability to have tough conversations. Linda explains that she thinks building trusting relationships encapsulates her leadership style. "*If we have a little bit of trust then we can move forward. I think if we don't have those relational trusts going on, you can't move anybody forward because they are not going to get on your bandwagon.*" Armstrong (2009) identifies trust as a key piece to relationships and leadership, "Cultivating a network of reliable workers and supporters and demonstrating trust were described as critical to constructing interpersonal relationships" (p. 109). Linda articulates that, tied into creating this trusting relationship are the characteristics of empathy and being a good listener.

As leaders, Katie and Melissa see collaboration and consultation with others as being an integral part of their approach to leadership practice. Katie describes her understanding of leadership, "*I think I am consultative.*" She goes on to say,

I think I am enthusiastic, but I think that I would never ask someone to do anything that I wouldn't do, but it goes back to support, that I truly believe that you lead by supporting people, and if they are not supported, they are not going to stretch. If they don't feel safe, they are not going to stretch; they are not going to push themselves, because who would?

Melissa shares a similar philosophy when describing her approach to leadership.

I hope it is inviting and collaborative, open door policy. Even when I sit down to write a performance appraisal, which it would be my first time doing that, I am really hoping that it would be more of a conversation than an evaluation. And maybe that is the wrong spin to put on it, but that's the kind of leader that I would like to be.

When it comes to leadership, none of the participants viewed it as a source of power as

Fitzgerald & Gunter (2008) suggest: the challenge for headteachers/principals is to view leadership as more than the possession of power and authority based on hierarchical status and refocus attention on teachers who lead learning in productive and pedagogic ways" (p. 336). The interviewed participants embraced this idea of shared leadership. Hallinger (2005) notes "the focus on leadership development in schools was the result of external policy reforms aimed at driving school improvement forward by changing the practice of school leaders" p. 2). It seems the eight vice-principals are aware of changing practices.

Recruitment and Retention of Leaders

When asked, are there supports they wishedthey had in place to support them as new leaders, many of the new vice-principals interviewed answered they would like more time with their colleagues or the opportunity to network with other vice-principals. Julia simply answered, "*that networking piece*", whereas others elaborated on the necessity to work and meet with other vice-principals. Jason argued,

> *I certainly like the opportunity of meeting with other admins, so if I were in a principal network, they tend to meet twice a month and talk about problems of practice. It is a little more structured than I am thinking, but something like that I would be into. But I know the opportunity to meet with peers, to bounce ideas off people or share experiences is really valuable.*

Jill shares this idea of having conversations with peers, "*I think the time with other colleagues that we haven't had this year, feels quite evident…so basically, conversations with more VPs would be great.*" Even when first entering the role, Katie and Michael would have appreciated more support. Michael suggests a new vice-principal orientation session would be valuable when transitioning from teacher to vice-principal in order to learn simple things, such as pay and benefit changes. As a new administrator, Katie would have found it beneficial to hear from other fairly new leaders.

> *I would have valued hearing, having the time carved out to hear from VPs who were newer to the role; even if it is three years, reflect on their first year, not even from our board that would be fine too. Because I know in such a close board there are things that you want to share, but you are kind of ratting somebody out, that is terrible, but I would have really valued hearing their stories.*

Learning from others seems to be the important when it comes to recruitment and retention of

new leaders. Normore (2004), states, "The transition from being a teacher to becoming a vice-principal is an intricate process of reflection and learning that requires socialization into a new community of practice and role identity" (p. 109). He also argues that school boards should "assess current practices and design flexible processes that support principals undergoing succession and lead to outcomes that advance district policies and goals" (p. 110).

Conclusion

This chapter analyzed and outlined the six themes that emerged from the eight interviews with new school vice-principals. The first theme explored was pathways to administration, which outlined the early transition from teacher to vice-principal, including training and experience. On the job support examined what sorts of supports were available to the new vice-principals once they entered their new role, including principals and other networks. Once they are on the job, the new vice-principals provided a job description based on "duties as assigned", including the key role of supporter as well as an outline of specific duties. Building relationships is seen as integral to transitioning to a new administrator, especially relationships with staff and the community. Rural issues are pertinent to this analysis as the school board and schools are bound by the rural context. The rural vice-principals addressed concerns surrounding isolation, focusing on transportation, access to resources, weather, and distance to job opportunities. Life and sensibilities in the rural community also influence the vice-principals in their new role. Lastly, leadership development was an obvious theme for the new school leaders. The new vice-principals had a broad range of understandings and approaches to leadership and offered suggestions to recruit and retain new school administrators. They had an understanding of instructional leadership and transformational leadership, however did not articulate their specific role in these terms. Instead, the new vice-principals focused on the importance of being calm when dealing with a crisis and they focused on the building relationship approach to leadership. They emphasized the importance of collaboration and consultation with staff. The new vice-principals feel that networking with other school leaders would be beneficial when recruiting and retaining new administrators. This would provide the opportunity to learn from experienced school leaders in order to improve their own practice and assist with the transition into the new role.

Chapter 6

Findings and Discussion

This chapter will present the research findings and discuss their implications in light of the current research and literature that is available. This research study explored the transition eight teachers have made into the vice-principal role within one rural school board in Ontario. It examined the personal and organizational factors that influenced their transition into a leadership position, as well as the supports received once in the role. The study also investigated possible challenges faced during the transition process and the specific role a new vice-principal takes on and specific duties they are assigned. During the interviews, a number of themes emerged amongst the eight participants. This chapter will present the findings from this study and I will confirm or contrast them with the previous findings from the research outlined in the literature review.

The pathway to administration is the first theme to be explored in this chapter. The decision to leave teaching for an opportunity to be an administrator is key to begin the transition process. The works of Barnett, Shoho, Oleszewsi (2012), Newton, Riveros, and da Costa (2013), and Lee, Kwan, Armstrong, (2009, 2010, 2015), Shen, Cooley, and Ruhl-Smith (1999), Stone-Johnson (2014), and Lee, Kwan, and Walker (2009) provide a framework interpreting how teachers begin their transition into the vice-principal's role. Next, this chapter will direct its attention to on the job support the new administrators received as they took on the leadership role. When in the new role, vice-principals' job description includes duties as assigned, and their key role in the school. Marshall and Hooley (2006), Armstrong (2009), Barnett, Shoho, and Oleszewski (2012), Rintoul, and Kennelley (2014), and Lee, Kwan, and Walker (2009), provide some context with regards to the role of the vice-principal and I also draw on these authors, and the Ontario Leadership Framework in the section focusing on the importance of building relationships for new vice-principals. As for the theme of rural issues, the works of Gammon (2007), Preston, Jakubiec, and Kooymans (2013), Wallin (2003, 2005), Duncan and Stock (2010), Ashton and Duncan (2012), and De Ruyck (2005) help frame this particular section. The final theme to be discussed in this chapter focuses on leadership in terms of types of leadership styles, and how to recruit and retain administrators. For this, I draw on Cruize and Boone (2009), Howley and Pendarvis (2002), Normore (2004), and Wood, Finch, and Mirecki (2013) to understand the essential elements behind recruiting and retaining effective leaders with desired

leadership abilities.

Pathway to Administration

Finding 1: Increased responsibilities and professional growth as motivations to enter administration

Newton, Riveros, and da Costa (2013) explain "very little has been written on how teacher leadership benefits school systems by means of leadership development and career advancement" (p. 107-108). Few studies have examined the pathways of teacher leaders and the extent to which those leaders move into formal leadership roles, such as vice-principal (Newton, Riveros, and da Costa, 2013, p. 108). There are certain aspects of the teachers' experiences and their understandings of the vice-principal role which influenced their decision to transition into an administrative role. However, many of the experiences of the interviewees mirrored those outlined in other research studies. "The first task was deciding to leave teaching. APs [assistant principals] leave teaching because they see an opportunity, they have role models that encourage them, or it has been a personal career goal" (Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett, 2012, p. 272). Most of the teachers in this study did not anticipate leaving their teaching role to enter the vice-principal's office, which contradicts Normore's (2004) argument, "Some studies have shown that at some point in their career, teachers have thought about being principals" (p. 115). Richard clearly articulates this experience, "I didn't get into administration figuring I want to do this." Newton, Riveros, and da Costa (2013) note that, "recent research suggests that the motivation of teachers to assume formal leadership roles is a more significant issue" (p. 106). Stone-Johnson (2014) argued that teachers "will assume leadership roles but not the general leadership of a school, or for that matter, a school district" (p. 620). Indeed, the eight interviewees in my study took on leadership roles in their schools, which ultimately led them to take on the vice-principal role. It was the leadership experiences that the interviewees undertook which provided a greater lens for school leadership and exposed teachers to a job beyond the classroom. "Professional development and teachers' involvement in working with other teachers' professional learning appear to be significant elements in the motivation of teachers to assume more formal leadership roles in the future" (Newton, Riveros, and da Costa, 2013, p. 107). For the eight individuals in this study, the decision to transition into the vice-principal role was influenced by their leadership responsibilities in their schools.

Stone-Johnson (2014) explains that when it comes to teachers taking on the vice-principal role,

> there are people who are qualified for the job, yet fewer people continue to pursue it. The reasons for this discrepancy are multifold and complex: some argue because of the increased workload; others look to the loss of classroom time with students as teachers transition into more administrative roles. (p.608)

This study found that the teachers were taking on leadership roles and professional development opportunities within their schools and these experiences led them down the pathway to administration. A 1999 study by Shen, Cooley, and Ruhl-Smith found that reasons teachers entered the role of principal were to provide effective leadership, have an impact on programme quality, and wanting to work with children/youth (p.358). This research aligns with the findings of Shen, Cooley, and Ruhl-Smith (1999) as the vice-principals interviewed left their teaching roles to have a positive effect as an administrator. Perhaps Katie illustrates this best when she stated she wanted to have an impact on students by making changes based on research and not "change for the sake of change, but to impact kids' lives in a positive way." Shen, Cooley, and Ruhl-Smith (1999) found that teachers tended "to enter administrative positions for reasons of self-actualization, followed by reasons related to esteem and affiliation" (p. 362). In other words, teachers in this study entered into administration for professional growth.

Five of the new vice-principals interviewed believe their role as the Special Education Resource Teacher was critical in order to gain leadership experience. The interviewees felt this leadership role provided an opportunity to work with the school team and be part of creating the whole school vision. Melissa explained that this role "was a real learning opportunity for me because up until that time I didn't really know what my administrators did." Half of the participants attributed their leadership experience to acting in the role of Teacher in Charge (TIC). This opportunity to fill in for the vice-principal or principal allowed the interviewees to get a feel for what the role entailed and was pivotal in their transition to the vice-principal role. Armstrong (2009) argues that these roles "mark the move from outsider to insider and between teaching and administrative roles. These processes reinforce and protect organizational roles and structures, and they communicate information about acceptable and unacceptable administrative behaviours and role boundaries" (p, 55).

The participants also cited the training program, Aspiring Leaders, as preparation for the

pathway into the vice-principal's role, some, like Jill participated in the training for three or four years. "The socialization of administrators to school administration begins in training or preparation programs, or even before" (Normore, 2004, P. 111). Some of the other participants discussed other leadership roles they had on various committees, such as athletics, or actually chairing in-school committees. Each participant had some type of formal leadership role in their school or within the school board and they cited these experiences as contributing to building their leadership capacity and their desire to be a vice-principal. "The development and implementation of administrator training programs as a form of professional development for school administrators should help administrators fit into the social systems of the schools, both professionally and organizationally" (Normore, 2004, p. 111). Those who participated in the Aspiring Leaders program with the school board and the PQP program recommend the training for future vice-principals. Specifically, one of the vice-principals interviewed recommended more case studies be examined and discussed during the Aspiring Leaders sessions.

Finding 2: Isolation and rapid adaptation to the role

"The transition from teacher to vice-principal (VP) is a significant personal and professional turning point within the organizational landscape of schools that has largely been ignored in the field of education administration. For novice administrators, it marks the end of their teaching career and the beginning of a new professional trajectory" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 398). Although most of the interviewees described their transition as "smooth", they went on to elaborate on their frustration with the new job and the exhaustion they experienced. Armstrong (2012) notes that the transition focus has been on principals and the findings generally applied to vice-principals. "Although principals and VPs share some common tasks, their transitional experiences and socialization impacts differ due to power differentials that are connected to their relative status within the administrative hierarchy" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 400). The vice-principal experience differs from that of the principal and they would prefer to have more time to adjust to the new role. Other participants alluded to the fact that their transition was "abrupt", or "fast and furious", or "pretty quick". Shoho and Barnett (2010) acknowledge the rapidity of the transition, "unlike beginning teachers, new principals are expected to be experts and to hit the ground running from Day 1" (p. 569). The interviewees acknowledge that the vice-principal role is also a physical and emotional job that can be lonely at times. As Armstrong (2015) suggests, "it is not uncommon for new administrators to experience multiple and ongoing challenges as they adapt

to and make sense of their new administrative role" (p. 110). Barnett, Shoho, and Oleszewski (2012), concur and acknowledge that new vice-principals often feel overwhelmed with the workload, especially the paperwork involved, and the time management concerns (p. 96).

The new vice-principals need to go through the multi-stage socialization process "as new VPs learn about and adjust to the expectations and responsibilities of their new role and idiosyncrasies of their school and district culture" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 400). Armstrong (2015) acknowledges that "many variables influence administrators' transitional trajectories, among which are individual personalities, the nature of their locale, and social, political, and cultural contexts and climates within which their transitions occur" (p. 100). A couple of the new vice-principals described their feelings as "lonely" and "isolated" in the new role. Oleszewski, Shoho, and Barnett (2012) state "not only must APs [assistant principals] be prepared for their role, they must learn the norms and expectations of the organization, often referred to as career socialization" (p. 270). During this time the new vice-principal must redefine their relationships with teachers (Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett p. 272). The new vice-principals may be lonely as they left their teaching colleagues behind for a new leadership role, which changes the dynamics of their relationships. Armstrong (2015) examines how "the feeling of 'doing it all by yourself' and the shift in teachers' perceptions and collegial interactions were poignant reminders to the vice-principals of their unexpected loss of a larger community of peers and their exit from the teaching culture" (p.114).

On the job support

Finding 3: Principal and establishing professional networks are critical during the transition from teacher to vice-principal

Each one of the participants cited the support of their principal as critical to their transition into their new administrative role. This finding supports Oleszewski, Shoho, and Barnett's (2012) claim, according to which "assistant principals have identified the principal as a facilitator of professional growth" (p. 269). The principal mentor is an important piece for the new vice-principal transitioning into the role. "Not only does the principal-mentor facilitate development and growth, but a positive relationship with the principal has been found to positively influence the level of preparation for the principalship" (Oleszewski, Shoho, &

Barnett, 2012, p. 269). In this rural school board, the principals are used as informal mentors and are not specifically assigned to each new vice-principal, and as Oleszewski, Shoho, and Barnett (2012) suggest, this phenomenon is common in most professional development in Canada. The informal mentor acts as a coach providing advice, answering questions, and guiding the new vice-principal. Armstrong (2015) acknowledges, "working with administrators who were accessible and tolerant of mistakes contributed positively to new administrators' sense of safety and security. However, they all identified their building principal's support and mentoring as most important to their growth and development as administrators" (p. 116).

The eight research study participants outlined several approaches their principals take to support them. Some principals have formal weekly meetings, and others have a casual open-door policy: the new vice-principals can approach the principal as needed. Nonetheless, all participants recognize the importance of having the support of their principal and his/her ability to coach them, even if they felt, like Katie, that they did not receive an appropriate amount of support from her principal. Armstrong (2015) outlines that new vice-principals do not always have supportive principals who help them fit into the school and monitor their personal growth. Katie's experience with her principal did not reflect a supportive relationship and as Armstrong (2015) suggests, "working in the front office meant being in close proximity to their principal, which created discomfort for some of the new vice-principals" (p. 116). Armstrong (2012) also acknowledges the struggle some new vice-principals face if they do not have a positive relationship with the principal. "The reduction in their peer community and the loss of relationships of trust they had built with teachers were particularly painful for those VPs who did not get along with their administrative team" (p. 413). Katie was the only one who discussed having a negative experience with the principal and was subjected to what Armstrong labeled, "'sink or swim' initiation rites by members of their own administrative team, who assigned them difficult and time consuming tasks…while withholding training and critical pieces of information" (p. 83).

When transitioning into the new role, vice-principals lose their teacher support group and need to access support in a different manner.

The vice-principals' early experiences of isolation, loss, and overload and the ongoing negative interactions with others motivated them to seek out new avenues of support. Participants described intentionally seeking out a wide range of individuals and groups in

order to access assistance and advice and to build collaborative relationships. (Armstrong, 2015, p. 116)

Armstrong's (2015) finding reflects the findings in this research study. Armstrong (2012) also reiterates the importance of "establishing networks with fellow administrators inside and outside their schools and reconnecting with mentors and sponsors for advice and support" (p. 412). The vice-principals in this study also recognized the importance of networking and most built their own networks of experienced principals or vice-principal colleagues.

To build his network, Jason, similar to others, explains that he "reached out a lot to people who were in the job, or colleagues, or people who I knew, or people I have worked with rather, in the same job, or they were principals and have been VPs recently. It was more informal that way." In her research findings, Armstrong (2015) suggests "while some participants were able to access mentoring and support over time and through their own personal initiative, their transitional stress and strain would have been lessened if they had these supports in a timely and developmentally appropriate manner" (p. 119). Many of the interview participants in this study also articulated their desire to have greater networking opportunities and collaboration with their vice-principal colleagues. This point is in line with Armstrong's (2015) findings as she suggests there is a need for further supports for new vice-principals "and opportunities to develop relationships with others with whom they can talk and test readily" (p. 119). "Isolation in the job is another concern and vice-principals emphasize the need for training and mentorship in the role. Vice-principals new to the role need the opportunity to network with those more experienced" (Nanavati& McCulloch, 2003, p. 16).

Job Description

Finding 4: Vice-principals see their key role as managers and supporting the practice of their principals

The job description for Ontario vice-principals is vague and open to interpretation. "Unfortunately, an unclear job description has been found to impact assistant principals' emotional well-being and job performance" (Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett, 2012, P. 273). The eight new vice-principals described the duties they perform in their new role and their job descriptions contain a number of similarities. Lee, Kwan, and Walker (2009) acknowledge that there are often discrepancies in literature when it comes to the *ideal* role of the vice-principal and

the *actual* role of the vice-principal. "Principals usually assigned roles and responsibilities to VPs at their discretion" (p. 188). Under Ontario's Education Act (1990), Regulation 298, principals have the discretion to shape the vice-principal's role as they are able to assign duties to vice-principals of the school. As such, vice-principals in this study said they tend to take on roles such as teacher supervision schedules, assigning supply teachers, medically at risk student information, emergency procedures, school safety, and student discipline. Julia sums up her job and that of the other interviewees,

> *Oh, duties as assigned. Some of the key ones would be…more of the management task, as opposed to the leadership tasks. Like the medically at risk forms, gathering progress reports in June…making sure that all of those managerial tasks are in line. The newsletter – I am trying to think of some of the other ones – making sure I have a handle on all the IPRC and IEPs…duties, schedules, snack programs, you know, all those things that make the building work and function well.*

Echoing this finding, Rintoul and Kennelly (2014) point out that "program expectations that are most relevant to the vice-principal role are commonly those related to school safety and teacher performance appraisals, but are principal defined" (p. 50). These duties align with the findings of Lee, Kwan, and Walker (2009) and Porter's (1996) reports on vice-principal responsibilities as "administering student discipline, supervising substitute teachers, providing instructional materials and establishing duty rosters" (p. 189). All participants noted that they were assigned similar responsibilities by their principal. According to Nanavati and McCulloch (2003), the vice-principals articulated stereotypical duties as assigned. "The stereotypical role of the vice-principal in the school is reflected in initial comments from interviewees as a person who is involved primarily with discipline and operations in the school" (p. 7). Oleszewski, Shoho, and Barnett (2012) suggest that if the purpose of the vice-principal was better understood and the job description clear, it would assist incoming vice-principals and relieve potential feelings of frustration. Rintoul and Kennelly (2014), argue "vice-principals new to the role are too over-whelmed by the steep learning curve of their own duties in dealing with students and parents to be worried about the higher level management of the school" (p. 50). By addressing these challenges, school boards would be better prepared to effectively support the work of new vice-principals and cultivate their leadership capacity, rather than simply build their managerial skills.

The eight vice-principals outlined the traditional duties that are assigned to vice-

principals and that they themselves were assigned to do. But, when it comes to their role in the school, the eight interviewees see themselves in more of a supportive role. "Vice-principals, however, emphasize that even though the traditional image is that of a vice-principal as disciplinarian, they take pride in going beyond that aspect of their role in student relations to include a much more supportive stance" (Nanavati& McCulloch, 2003, p. 12). Providing a supportive role is not necessarily a higher level of management; however, it is the key to success in their new role. Katie acknowledges "support, it's all about support", although admitting most people would see discipline as the key role of the vice-principal. Katie sees support as a pre-emptive strike against discipline issues or potential problems. The vice-principals believe their role is to support students, teachers, and the parents. Jason expressed his opinion, "basically my job is to support learning." The new vice-principals acknowledge that being supportive is an essential leadership piece. Lee, Kwan, and Walker (2009), suggest that "future training of VPs should place greater emphasis on enhancing their interpersonal skills and competencies in staff management" (p. 203). By providing support to members of the school community, new vice-principals are utilizing their interpersonal skills to work well with others. Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) state, "vice-principals often bridge the gap between teachers, students and parents when difficult issues arise" (p. 12).

While some vice-principals may want to take on more of a leadership role, they must follow the direction of the school principal. Some of the new vice-principals see their role as supporting the principal. Armstrong (2009) argues, "assistant principals are often constrained by their principal's leadership style and top-down approaches, and novice assistant principals receive clear signals that they must buy into the system, leran the rules, and emulate their administrative superiors in order to get ahead" (p. 23). Some of the new vice-principals expressed the importance of being viewed as part of the administrative team, working together as leaders. Melissa explicitly states, "my key role is to support the principal and carry out those duties as assigned." And Linda clearly adds "I feel like we are partners…we really work as a team." Julia reiterates this sentiment, "my role is to be the arm of [principal's name]; to work as a team. To lead the school; to set direction; to move the ship forward. I want to be her partner in that." Armstrong (2009) might argue that this level of teamwork is part of the socialization process to indoctrinate the new vice-principals, forcing them to conform to the school and board norms (p. 24), but the new vice-principals included in this study appear to work happily and co-

operatively with their principals.

Building Relationships

Finding 5: Establishing professional and collegial relationships with staff and community members is central to the successful transition from teacher to vice-principal in a rural context

In Armstrong's (2009) study, "the assistant principals reported that while technical skills were easier to acquire, developing personal and people management skills was more difficult because of the unpredictability of their role and the different people and constituency groups to whom they were accountable" (p. 108). In a later study Armstrong (2012), also outlines the need for vice-principals "to develop a more balanced perspective of their disciplinary and managerial functions, the VPs intentionally sought to interact positively with students and staff" (p. 415). The eight vice-principals interviewed in this study also note the importance of developing relationships in their new administrative role. They each acknowledged the necessity of building relationships with teachers, and some mentioned Education Assistants, in order to do their job and move the school forward. For example, Julia specifically mentioned validating the work her teachers do and the importance of being a co-learner with the staff. Jill led collaborative inquiry groups with her staff and feels like working with teachers enhanced her relationships with the teachers. Melissa sees this as an "instructional leadership piece", which will be discussed further in this chapter, in order to "be putting the pressure to move forward." Armstrong (2012) sees this as vice-principals "reintegrating their teaching skills in positive ways to support students, staff, and parents" (p. 415).

For new vice-principals, developing and cultivating relationships is part of the leadership role in order to enhance the school's success and implement the school's and board's vision. Armstrong (2015) argues that the vice-principal job can be difficult, but "their ability to work positively with teachers and the broader community to support students afforded them a new sense of purpose" (p. 118). Nanavati and McCulloch (2003) also state "it is the daily interactions and going beyond the professional role to a more personal, caring level of involvement that makes a difference" (p. 13). Jason articulates why the work with teachers is important when he explained that sometimes there are tough decisions to be made and when the vice-principal gets

to know people and build a rapport with them, "they felt that you took their thoughts and feelings into consideration; that you had their best interest in mind."

Jason's opinion and those of the other interviewees relate to Armstrong (2009) in that "their conversations focused primarily on the challenge of working with teaching faculty in non-adversarial ways. For the most part, the assistant principals engaged in instrumental relationships with faculty to 'buy in' to school and district goals" (p. 110). Normore (2004) also notes "school administrators are interdependent with those with whom they work. The school administrator has formal leadership power but depends on those in the school for the power of the group to act" (p. 114). Armstrong (2010) argued that "the more experienced vice-principals clearly articulated a shift from being task oriented to being people oriented" (p. 708). Although the eight participants in this study clearly outlined their "duties as assigned", each was also able to emphasize the significance of building relationships and establishing trust and credibility with the teaching staff. "Developing relationships of trust was seen as indispensable in bringing teachers on board, and it entailed involving teachers in formal and informal decision-making processes" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 110). The focus on relationship building may partly be thanks to the emphasis on Building Relationships and Developing People in the 2013 Ontario Leadership Framework, the core document for the Principal's Qualification Program and the school board's aspiring leaders program.

Another area the new vice-principals emphasized as significant to their new role revolves around developing community relationships. This corresponds with Shoho and Barnett's (2010) findings that an "area challenging new principals involved community issues. Specifically, new principals were surprised at the amount of time they spent on parental and political – school climate issues" (p. 576). Although Shoho and Barnett's (2010) study focused on new principals, their findings certainly relate to the sentiments of the new vice-principals interviewed in this study. Lee, Kwan, and Walker (2009) found that vice-principals in Hong Kong believed external communication and connection was one of the areas of importance for the vice-principal, although it was at the bottom of the list as a key priority. Kwan (2009) specifically notes that external communication and connection involves "responding to parent inquiries, responding to community inquiries, attending parent-teacher association meetings, encouraging parents to participate in school activities, and preparing written information about the school and events" (p. 196). The new vice-principals in this study felt that cultivating relationships with the

community, including parents of course, was a key area of focus for them. Again, Ontario leaders are expected to consult "stakeholders" such as parents. Under the Ontario Leadership Framework (2013), when it comes to the domain of Setting Directions, school leaders are expected to

- use many different formal and informal opportunities to explain to stakeholders the overall vision and goals established for the school
- demonstrate to all stakeholders the use of the school's vision and goals in day-to-day actions and decision making
- regularly invite different stakeholder groups to discuss how their work furthers the school's vision and goals. (p. 12)

In this study, the vice-principals view the parents as the stakeholders with whom they need to communicate the school's vision and goals. Michael cites being able to meet parents at "open house night" as it is an opportunity to interact with the community. Melissa acknowledges that the school council and attending the school council meeting is crucial to her role in developing community relationships and communicating with their stakeholders. Jill also notes that writing the school newsletters and communicating with parents is essential to building those relationships as it keeps the community informed and involved. "Because of the smaller and more intimate communities in which rural administrators work, they don't have the same means to separate themselves from the political arena as do administrators in urban environments. It is not uncommon, for example, for an administrator to be approached in a grocery store and asked about school related matters." (De Ruyck, 2005, p. 18). Due to the nature of the rural context, building community relationships is a necessity for the new vice-principal. Ashton and Duncan (2012) acknowledge the importance of these community relationships, "getting parents and community on board requires showing them that progress is possible and communicating clearly the steps to be taken" (p. 22). The eight vice-principals recognize the need to develop and maintain positive, trusting relationships with the community, especially given the unique rural context. Ashton and Duncan (2012) argue that "this process of socialization into the organization and community is a skill all new principals need to develop" (p. 22) in a rural community.

Rural Issues

Finding 6: Isolation in rural communities limits access to professional opportunities for new vice-principals

Preston, Jakubiec, and Kooymans (2013) argue that when it comes to rural issues "research highlights that rural principals commonly face specific sociocultural and economic challenges associated with the school community" (p. 1). Overall, the principals in this study concur that there are issues that are specific to the rural context. Hood and Clarke (1986) argue that there are several types of isolation, such as geographic isolation that focuses on the school as the centre of the community and cultural isolation that prevents "diffusion of effort", and then there is personal loneliness due to the distance between people and places (p. 80). Most of the participants indicated that the vice-principal role in a rural school can be isolating and that geography does impact their duties. This sentiment is reflected in current research. "Principals of small schools were more isolated from leadership programs, resources, and fellow principals, as compared to leaders of medium and large schools" (Preston, Jakubiec, &Kooymans, 2013, p. 6). Julia mentions the isolation in terms of lacking opportunities "people being isolated in their own homes and reliance on tech, so that they have fewer [opportunities] socially." Richard describes the rural isolation as a barrier to developing "professional relationships with community, outside of the community, just because it's such a large geographical area." Melissa also discusses the isolation, in terms of a lack of resources for her students and the lack of transportation, but she also notes the geographic barriers to her professional career as a vice-principal as she will have to drive to whichever school she is placed in and will not be considered as a candidate for some schools simply because she is at a geographic disadvantage from all schools within this rural school board. Jason suggests that he utilizes technology as a way to alleviate feelings of isolation. De Ruyck (2005) argues that, in fact, rural school leaders do have limited networking opportunities and technological connections do not suffice. "Beyond limited access to professional development opportunities, rural principals also have fewer opportunities to network with colleagues in face-to-face environments. While there are of course several means of communication that can help alleviate this feeling of isolation, email and telephone cannot fully replace regular face-to-face contact amongst colleagues" (p. 9). According to Ashton and Duncan (2012) "leadership can often be a lonely and isolated role that is compounded in rural settings. Often there is a 'sink or swim' mentality to beginning principalship, which can leave new leaders overwhelmed, and school turnover rates high" (p.21).

Ashton and Duncan (2012) provide a number of tools for new rural school leaders to deal with professional isolation and loneliness. The first is "find a mentor" (p. 21) and the researchers go on to suggest "if formal mentoring approaches are the exception rather than the rule, then new leaders have a responsibility to seek out a mentor or coach", which the eight vice-principals in this study have done in light of the fact the rural school board does not offer a formal mentoring program. Most participants noted "the benefits of mentoring and coaching to the mentee include[ing]: guidance and support during the transition to leadership, increased self-confidence, encouragement to take risks and achieve goals, as well as having a sounding board for the new leader to discuss issues and questions" (p. 21). The other tools recommended by Ashton and Duncan (2012) are developing personal resilience with healthy coping mechanisms (p. 21) which is essential for the new vice-principals who described demanding long days and often evenings in their new role. It is essential that new vice-principals find an outlet for their stress because the "higher level of self-efficacy positively affected their actions, their stress levels, and self-esteem" (Ashton & Duncan, 2012, p. 22). The third tool presented is in line with the second as it focuses on developing personal resilience with purpose (p. 22). It is one thing to be positive, but another to be constructive and link the positivity to a goal or personal mission. Ashton and Duncan (2012) argue that if administrators develop a personal mission, which they can reflect upon, then this increases their odds of overcoming adversity (p. 22). It is important for new vice-principals to have a purpose and the participants in this study viewed their purpose as supporting the vision of the principal and the school board; they did not necessarily articulate their own personal vision. Perhaps the rural school board can incorporate some of these tools in order to ease the transition of the new vice-principals and help to alleviate the feelings of isolation the new role tends to bring. The final tools outlined by Ashton and Duncan (2012) are: 1) to establish key relationships and, 2) to take the time to build rapport in order to curb feelings of isolation. These two areas are crucial to the new vice-principal and have been outlined in the previous section. There is an existing awareness surrounding "socialization is the process of learning about the culture of a community and organization" and that principals should "take the time to build rapport with teachers and staff demonstrate their respect for the school culture, as well as a desire to be a part of the community" (Ashton & Duncan, 2012, p. 24).

Finding 7: Rural vice-principals struggle to balance the needs of the school and those of the

community

The new vice-principals articulate that they, their staff, and students are enriched by living and working in a rural community. Howley (1997) acknowledges the relationship between school and community sustainability, the rural community's engagement with rural schools, and that there is a sense of attachment to rural places (p.7). The vice-principals in this study note that the rural community has its own unique culture of which they need to be aware (De Ruyck, 2005, p. 16). As Linda mentioned, students growing up on a farm have a different background than urban students. The vice-principals also believe that the rural community offered unique opportunities, such as the outdoor education activities as described by Richard. Each of the vice-principals grew up in a rural community and six out of the eight grew up and attended school within this rural school board; as such they are aware of the challenges facing a rural school environment. "Principals who were raised in the community where the current administrator had a greater understanding of and deep appreciation for the values, priorities, and culture of the community members" (Preston, Jakubiec, &Kooymans, 2013, p. 3). Katie believes growing up and attending school in the rural setting is pertinent to her vice-principal role because she understands how to approach people because they come from the same background and she attended school with the same cross-section of people. Because of this attachment to the community, the new vice-principals "must be particularly wary of the politics that often come into play, simply because there can be a greater degree of interconnectedness amongst members of a smaller community" (De Ruyck, 2005, p. 16). Jill, for example, likes the idea of being in a small community because it offers an element of safety because of the familiarity with the community and its residents.

The vice-principals in this study were raised in a rural community and most attended schools within this rural school board. "Being the principal of a rural school is more than just a job; it is a lifestyle that tends to be watched by many local community members" (Preston, Jakubiec, &Kooymans, 2013, p. 1). Preston, Jakubiec, and Kooymans (2013) also suggest that "school board trustees and hiring personnel appear to value candidates who possess a panoramic, personal, and historical understanding of the cultural, social, historical, and economical functions of the school community" (p. 3). The interview participants listed the positive points of living and working in the rural community, such as community connections, possessing the rural background, ties to nature and agriculture. "The rural school leader is expected to relate to the

rural lifestyle, live within the school community, participate within local organizations and events, and act as a professional, behavioural, social, cultural, and spiritual role model" (Preston, Jakubiec, &Kooymans, 2013, p. 2). One issue concerning to the vice-principals was the emphasis students and families tend to place on employment outside of school, whether it be on the farm, in the fields, or in another place of business. The rural principal walks a fine line in leading a school focused on academic achievement, "while simultaneously serving the local community and its needs, wants and identity (Preston, Jakubiec, &Kooymans, 2013, p. 12). The vice-principals appear to be aware of this duality in their new role and find a balance between the academic focus of school and the expectations of the rural community.

Finding 8: New rural principals are concerned about the lack of diversity in their schools.

The vice-principals in this study outlined some issues that are not overtly presented in other research. They voiced concerns surrounding the lack of diversity within the rural schools compared to urban centres. This rural school board and the vice-principals themselves are still fairly homogeneous, White, English as a first language, population. "In an effort to preserve this sociocultural harmony, many rural community members are apprehensive of change. Because the culture of rural schools reflects the characteristics of the immediate community, the concept of change is often a contentious issue for rural principals" (Preston, Jakubiec, &Kooymans, 2013, p. 10). The lack of diversity and exposure to other cultures and lifestyles was a concern to some of the new vice-principals interviewed in this study.

Leadership Development

Finding 9: The principal plays a central role in stimulating the leadership capacities of rural vice-principals

"While principals in all settings require a multitude of skills and face many issues, the context of small, rural schools creates additional or intensified challenges for leaders" (Duncan & Stock, 2010, p. 294). As noted earlier, there are important challenges for administrators at rural schools. The participants noted that it is essential to acknowledge the rural lifestyle and culture as we begin to understand leadership practices. This research study found that the new vice-principals recognize their important role as school leaders, but did not articulate their individual role in the school improvement process. This seems to be a central issue in the definition of the role of these educators, as Beesley and Clark (2015) noted that "school leaders

play a pivotal role in the school improvement process" (p. 242). The vice-principals in this study suggest they play more of a supporting, or secondary role, when it comes to school improvement.

The rural geography is vast and covers a lot of area. The population of rural areas is often in decline, which means less funding and reduced resources for education. "Developing sustainable leadership in rural areas is a challenge and should be a priority for state and national leaders" (Duncan & Stock, 294, p. 294). When it comes to school leadership, "traditionally, the principal focuses on managing the school environment in such ways as goal setting, budgeting and resource allocation, maintaining an orderly environment, and evaluating teachers" (Duncan & Stock, 2010, p. 295). Now, "schools are searching for ways to improve student learning and achievement" (Yost, Vogel, & Rosenberg, 2009, p.20). Few of the participants could articulate a specific leadership perspective they followed, but they mostly alluded to being instructional leaders within the rural school. The vice-principals viewed their role as supporting teachers and being co-learners as part of professional learning communities. "Leaders who work with teachers can significantly influence their instructional practices, which in turn can increase student learning" (Duncan & Stock, 2010, p. 295). Without labelling it, the vice-principals in this study were working towards being instructional leaders.

> Instructional leadership is often defined as a set of behaviours; instructional leaders prioritize student and adult learning by activating the community's support for school success, setting high expectations for performance for students and teachers, and creating a culture of learning. They collect multiple sources of data, analyze them, and use findings to drive decisions on instructions to address barriers to students learning. (Duncan & Stock, 2010, p. 295).

The new vice-principals may not yet be able to articulate a concrete understanding of leadership because, as Rintoul and Kennelly show (2014), they are "learning how to do their job while actually on-the-job" (p. 53) The new vice-principals are concerned with their day-to-day duties and "current training favours management over school leadership, yet hiring processes for vice-principals place a high value on demonstrated leadership" (Rintoul& Kennelly, 2014, p. 54). The new vice-principals are still honing their understanding of leadership. "The role of principals as chief academic officer or instructional leader must become more valued, explicit, and valued in the recruitment process" (Gajda&Militello, 2008, p.17). Gajda and Militello (2008) believe it is the principal as instructional leader that will ignite and meet the intrinsic need of educators and

entice them into the leadership role. Thus, the principal plays a key role in building the leadership capacity of new, rural vice-principals.

Finding 10: The new vice-principals believe the rural school board requires a recruitment and retention policy which values the unique rural experience

"Expectations of the principal's role include instructional leader, disciplinarian, supervisor, fundraiser, public relations expert and fiscal manager. More accountability and responsibility have been added to the job over the years" (Normore, 2004, p. 2). Although current literature tends to focus on principals, the same can be argued for the role of the vice-principal. "When attempting to staff rural schools with effective principals, school boards often find themselves at a disadvantage recruiting and retaining administrators" (Wood, Finch, &Mirecki, 2013, p. 2). The recruitment and retention of administrators is a real concern. "Principal retention and recruitment have become important policy issues, particularly for school districts that are less likely to attract qualified principals due to undesirable working conditions" (Beesley& Clark, 2015, p. 242). Cruzeiro and Boone (2009) argue that rural school leaders should be those who value the close-knit rural community and have a clear understanding of the challenges rural schools encounter. The findings from this research study indicate that the rural school board in this case, hired new vice-principals with rural background who possessed a strong understanding of the intricacies of the rural community as all participants had a rural background. Also, due to the nature of the rural community, Cruzeiro and Boone (2009) suggest the rural administrator should be willing to interact with the community outside of the school and be a visible member of the community. Given the emphasis the eight vice-principals put on developing relationships, it appears they understand the significance of community involvement and visibility.

"Recruitment activities involve organizing staff, generating applicant pools, matching individual talents with interests and opportunities, and adjusting and developing personnel" (Normore, 204, p. 3). There are a number of factors that are significant when recruiting new administrators. "According to Rebore (2001) recruitment practices are affected by factors in the school division and its community including size of the school district, geographical area, other employment conditions in the community, working conditions, salary levels, fringe benefits, and fluctuation in student population" (Normore, 2004, p. 3). The new vice-principals in this study

are cognizant of the role geography plays in the rural context when it comes to both recruiting and retaining new administrators. Wood, Finch, and Mirecki (2013) found that geographic location was reported as the most challenging factor for recruiting new administrators, specifically their "tests revealed rural districts not located near an urban area were more likely to report geographic isolation and social isolation" (p. 5). When it came to recruitment and training, the new vice-principals also articulated the importance of attending the Aspiring Leaders Program offered through the rural school board, however Normore (2004) indicates "that the confidence school districts may have in their administration training programs does not ensure top notch individuals will be selected" (p. 3).

> We recommend creative efforts to improve recruitment of new principals, that these efforts target educators earlier in their teaching career and emphasize the need for individuals committed to the improvement of teaching and learning. Simply recruiting more people for a position that appears undesirable will not solve the problem of the principal pipeline. The role of school leader is difficult and leaders are not provided with pragmatic recipes for success. (Gajda&Militello, 2008, p. 17)

The vice-principals in this study are committed to improving teaching and learning in their schools and dedicated to academic success. They were also recruited relatively early in their careers as the average age would be early to mid-forties, thus having a long administrative career ahead of them.

"It is not only a matter of the selection of effective principals; rather it is the retention of effective principals who can articulate a vision that will engage teachers, parents, the district, and the larger community in the long term" (Wood, Finch, &Mirecki, 2013, p. 1-2). Like teachers, administrative leadership becomes more effective after the first three years gaining experience on the job (Wood, Finch, &Mirecki, 2013). "Effective principals make improvements in their first few years of leadership, but their effectiveness definitely increases over time" (Wood, Finch, &Mirecki, 2013, p. 3-4). In their research study focusing on recruiting and retaining rural administrators, Wood, Finch, and Mirecki (2013) found "the highest rated strategies identified were creating a positive school culture, investing in professional development opportunities, and using technology for mentoring and professional development" (p. 9). The number one strategy the rural school board and schools have to implement in order to retain administrators is to create a positive school culture, but according to Wood, Finch, and Mirecki (2013), this includes having

a personal connection to the rural community. "Sixteen participants cited location and family ties as important to staying within a rural district" (Wood, Finch, &Mirecki, 2013, p.10), which reinforces the importance of belonging and the idea of "growing-your-own are perceived as the most important aspects of retaining administrators in rural communities" (p. 10). Six out of the eight vice-principals in this study would fit the "grow your own" approach as they grew up in the rural community, attended schools in this board, were teachers within the rural school board, gained leadership experience with this board, and were eventually placed as new vice-principals in the rural school board. "'Grow your own' initiatives nurture local talent through collaborations among public school systems and postsecondary institutions" (Wood, Finch, &Mirecki, 2013, p. 11).

Finally, Wood, Finch, &Mirecki (2013) echo the sentiments of the new vice-principals suggesting that more "concerted efforts in mentoring to help high functioning teachers move into administrative positions and become effective instructional leaders" are required. New vice-principals desire more professional development. The interview participants requested improved and increased opportunities to meet and work with colleagues. "Access to less formal programs, especially those that focus on networking, also seems to be important for increasing the competence as well as the job satisfaction of rural administrators" (Howley&Pendarvis, 2002, p. 4). The rural school board should consider greater networking opportunities to ensure new vice-principals are accessing the support they desire.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research findings in light of the current literature surrounding the topic of teachers transitioning into the role of vice-principal in rural schools. I began the chapter by situating my findings in light of the existing research available to interpret the transition from classroom teacher to new administrator. The first finding indicates that teachers who took on increased responsibilities and professional growth opportunities were motivated to enter into administration. For the eight new vice-principals, they took on increased responsibilities within their school and/or at the board level which influenced their decision to leave their teaching role to enter administration. The interviewees also took advantage of leadership training and professional growth opportunities which allowed them to gain access to the vice-principal role. Next, I found that the transition to the vice-principal role brought with it

feelings of isolation and required a rapid adaptation into the role. The participants described their transition into the leadership role as "abrupt" and "fast and furious". Several of the new vice-principals discussed feelings of loneliness being away from teacher colleagues and from the isolating effects of the rural context. The third finding indicates that principal support (or lack of) and professional networks are critical during the transition from teacher to principal. The need for principal support and networks can help new vice-principals overcome feelings of isolation. Although no formal networks were in place, the new vice-principals established their own network with various educators in order to meet their professional needs. The fourth finding shows that the eight rural vice-principals are assigned traditional managerial duties by their principal, where the emphasis is on management and on supporting the leadership practices of their principal. The fifth finding focuses on building relationships, specifically the need for new vice-principals to establish professional and collegial relationships with school staff and community members in order to successfully transition from teacher to vice-principal. Given the rural context, understanding and developing community relationships are key to success. Finding six also focuses on the rural context and found that the isolation in rural communities limits the access to professional opportunities for new vice-principals. The seventh finding centres on the particularities of the rural setting. The eight participants believe that understanding the unique context of the rural setting and balancing the community needs and school needs is a key factor in a successful transition into the vice-principal role. The eighth finding focuses on the lack of diversity in the rural schools and vice-principals would like to address this concern. When it comes to leadership development, finding nine indicates that the principal plays a central role in stimulating the leadership capacities of rural vice-principals. The tenth and final finding in this study emphasizes the need for the rural school board to create a recruitment and retention policy which acknowledges and values the unique rural experience. Recruitment and retention of rural administrators is a legitimate concern. Administrators who comprehend the rural community are most desired, therefore those with a personal connection have an advantage as they are most likely to stay and work for the long term within the rural school board.

Chapter 7
Summary and Conclusion

Thesis Summary

This study examined the experiences of educators who transitioned into the role of vice-principal in one rural school board situated in Southwestern Ontario. The purpose of writing this thesis was to listen to the new vice-principals, to document their experiences, and to produce knowledge and awareness about their transition into the vice-principal role. More specifically, I examined how newly-appointed school leaders experience the transition from teaching in the classroom to the vice-principal role. The voices of the participants are crucial elements in this depiction of the experiences of current rural vice-principals. The intent of this research was to gain access to the thoughts and experiences of new, rural vice-principals, which is extremely beneficial, considering that the voice of Canadian rural vice-principals is under-represented in current research and scholarship. The narratives in this study revealed the challenges they faced, types of supports they received, and outlined their key roles/duties.

This research shows there is a need to capture the experiences of new rural vice-principals in order to address why teachers choose to leave the classroom for a leadership role and outline issues they face once they enter the administration. The new school leaders go through a socialization process from the time they decide to take on the vice-principal position and they then encounter a social-emotional journey. Throughout this thesis, I drew upon Bridges (2001 & 2009), Petch (2009), and Sigford (1998) as a framework to comprehend the transition and socialization process. The findings of this study could then be used to assist this rural school board with training practices, and retention and recruitment strategies.

In the literature review and throughout this thesis I acknowledged the work of Armstrong (2009, 2010, 2015), Wallin (1999, 2003), DeRuyck (2005), Navanti and McCulloch (2003), Cruzeiro and Boone (2009), Ashton and Duncan (2012), Barnett, Shoho, and Oleszewski (2012), Normore (2004), Rintoul and Kennelly (2014), and Lee, Kwan, and Walker (2009). This represents some of the most significant research I utilized as part of the reading that informed this study. Each of these studies contributed to my understanding of the role of vice-principals, rural issues, retention and recruitment, and the transition process. Armstrong (2009, 2010, & 2015) provided valuable research focusing on the experiences and transition of new vice-principals. While her work emphasizes the stories of urban vice-principals, it is important

toconsider its findings and significance as it is one of the few studies that focuses on the transition from teacher to vice-principal. Armstrong's research is similar to this as she also interviewed eight vice-principals new to the role. Barnett, Shoho, and Oleszewski (2012) and Rintoul and Kennelly (2014) also provided insight into the new experiences of new vice-principals, with an emphasis on the realities new leaders face while on the job. Their research provides insight into the training of new vice-principals and the challenges vice-principals face when they make the transition. Barnett, Shoho, and Oleszewski's (2012) study of new vice-principals was conducted in South Central Texas and attempts to understand the role challenges and expectations of vice principals and to explore "whether the realities of the job change over time with increasing experience" (p. 93). Although their research is set in an American context, it was important to glean insight into the role of the new vice-principal. Rintoul and Kennelly's work is situated closer to the context of this study, as it is situated in the province of Ontario. While other studies on this topic have been conducted in Australia, Great Britain, and the United States and focus on the experiences of urban vice-principals, this thesis explored the transitional experiences of rural vice-principals in Southwestern Ontario.

I examined what the impetus was for teachers to move into a leadership role, the pathway to get there, and conceptualized the transition into administration. In several ways, new leaders are socialized into their new vice-principal role. Each participant emphasized the importance of having proper supports in place and acknowledged the significant role their principal played in the transition process. This investigation raised important questions about what rural school boards can do to attract, recruit, and retain quality administrators. The rural context means school leaders face different challenges in their school communities. The research also explored the different perceptions surrounding leadership and how vice-principals view their personal impact as leaders. The research conducted adds to the knowledge about the critical role the vice-principal plays in rural schools. This research also highlights the need and value of pursuing further research into the transition teachers undergo as they transition into the vice-principal role in rural schools.

Summary of Findings

This research study found that increased responsibilities and professional growth were motivators for teachers to enter into administration. I found that the interview participants did not

anticipate leaving their teaching role to become administrators. Those that entered the vice-principal role were teachers who took on leadership roles within their schools; as outlined in the Ontario Leadership Framework, their capacity was being built by their leaders and this helped them see "the bigger picture" in their school and school board, which led them down the pathway to administration. Aspiring leaders tend to seek out leadership training and leadership experiences; for example, in this study half of the participants undertook the Teacher in Charge role and five out of eight had experience as the Special Education Resource teacher. Half of the interviewees also attended the rural school board's Aspiring Leaders program and found it beneficial training for the vice-principal role. The new vice-principals also cited the Principals Qualification Program as valuable training for new school leaders. It is in this program that potential administrators first encounter the Ontario Leadership Framework. This reflects Normore's (2004) findings that the socialization of administrators begins in training programs. Participating in leadership training and leadership roles indicates an openness to becoming an administrator.

My study also found that new vice-principals experienced feelings of isolation in their new role and that there was a rapid adaptation entering the new job. The new vice-principals often feel overwhelmed by their new assignment and face a socialization process to adjust. Some of the early feelings vice-principals articulated were "lonely" and "isolated" as they learn the new role and have to redefine their relationships with teachers. These feelings of isolation and "doing it on your own" are reflected in the work of Oleszweski and Shoho, (2012) as well as in Armstrong (2015). Some of the new administrators described their transition as "abrupt" and "fast and furious", which confirms Armstrong's (2015) "trial by fire" findings. In reflection I think that in order to transition effectively, this study also found that principal support and establishing a professional network are critical during the transition from teacher to principal. Currently, a formal mentorship program is unavailable in this school board. New vice-principals created their own support systems with the principal or with colleagues in other schools, but I wonder if they should have to. The importance of networking was also articulated by the participants in this study. I believe that, not only do new vice-principals need the support of experienced principals and mentors, but they also need to network with their own colleagues in order to share experiences and seek advice. As I noted in my field notes, developing a network or having more opportunities to meet with colleagues would help to diminish the feelings of

isolation and loneliness that some participants discussed. The idea of having a formal or informal network is reflected in Armstrong's (2015) findings. Based on my research, it is my belief that the rural school board would benefit from providing greater networking opportunities for its new vice-principals.

The vice-principals in this study see their key role as managers and supporting the practices of their principals, which is not necessarily reflected in Ontario's Leadership Framework which outlines leadership expectations. This study found that vice-principals were assigned duties by the principal, as per Ontario's Education Act. When reflecting upon my field notes and the interview data, it is obvious that the duties assigned were managerial in nature, scheduling, teacher appraisals, and school safety; the other significant part of the vice-principal's job is discipline. These duties support the analysis of Rintoul and Kennelly (2014) and Lee, Kwan, and Walker (2009), which outlined the stereotypical job description of a vice-principal. The interviewees had a solid understanding of their job description, which does not support Oleszewski, Shoho, and Barnett (2012) who suggest that new vice-principals require a clearer job description. As for their key role as a leader in the school, the new vice-principals in this study see their role as supporting the work of their principals, again this specific task is not reflected in the Ontario Leadership Framework of Ontario's Education Act. They see it as their duty to support the principal, in particular, but also the teachers, students, and families in the school community. In analysing the interview data and my field notes, it appears that in this capacity vice-principals are using their interpersonal skills. Interpersonal skills could be developed to further enhance teamwork within the school, as the new vice-principals see themselves as part of a team working primarily with their principal, and also with other key stakeholders in the school.

According to the eight vice-principals, establishing professional and collegial relationships with staff and the community is central to the successful transition from teacher to vice-principal. Developing relationships with others is beyond simple management skills and does involve interpersonal skills and working with others and is one area reflected in the Ontario Leadership Framework – Building Relationships and Developing People. The eight vice-principals noted the importance of building relationships in order to better do their job, which involves school improvement. Building relationships and building rapport are important, so staff members know that the school leaders care about their thoughts and opinions. Having positive

professional relationships also helps when administration has to make difficult decisions or require teachers to work collegially for the betterment of the school. New vice-principals also noted the significance of building community relationships in the rural area and the key role communication plays in creating positive and professional relationships with the community members. Events such as parent's night and school council meetings are seen as essential to building and maintaining relationships along with up-to-date newsletters keeping everyone informed. These positive, trusting, and professional relationships are viewed as a critical piece to the rural vice-principal's job, especially given the unique features of the rural setting.

My study also found that there are issues unique to the rural setting. The first issue noted was a sense of isolation due to the geographic location of this rural school board and the distance between schools and towns. Some of the new vice-principals found that there was a sense of loneliness because of the distance between people and places. Some cited the distance and isolation as a barrier to professional development and networking opportunities. Other vice-principals outlined the limits to job opportunities, as they would not be able to access jobs at all schools in the school board; they also cited geographic isolation as a hindrance to future career options. In reflection, I think that geographic concerns such as distance and isolation are one of the key concerns for rural vice-principals.

The new vice-principals agreed that there are benefits to working in a rural setting, but this study points to the struggle of new rural vice-principals to meet the academic needs of the school and the expectations of the community. They note the connection between school and community and that the school leaders are expected to become part of the community. The rural school offers outdoor educational opportunities for staff and students that urban schools do not. The vice-principals in this study were familiar with the rural lifestyle and had that as part of their schema, which they believed helped them enter into the administrative role. It is this understanding of the rural context that helps them relate to their staff, students, and community. With this understanding of the rural way of life comes the acknowledgement that there are some difficulties. The new vice-principals discussed the work ethic in the rural community and how it sometimes is more important to work than attend school, which contributes to absenteeism and creates tensions with some parents and students. My field notes and interview data suggest the lack of cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity in the rural schools is a concern for some of the participants. I found that this concern my not directly relate to the transition into the new role,

however the new school leaders would like to open a conversation to address the issue. There are some concerns, however, that they may face opposition from the rural community.

Familiarity with the rural context and the skills to move a school forward are important elements of leadership in rural settings, however it is the principal who plays a central role in stimulating the leadership capacities of new rural vice-principals. The eight new vice-principals identify the importance of being a school leader and are following the instructional leadership model. They saw themselves as co-learners and supporting the teachers to improve student achievement. The new vice-principals have not yet come to articulate their own leadership vision and this may be because they are focusing on learning other aspects of the job. The participants also focus on supporting their principal's leadership and still honing their own leadership skills. The final finding focuses on recruitment and retention of school leaders. This is a concern for rural school boards. The new vice-principals believe the rural school board required a recruitment and retention policy which values the unique rural experience. Studies such as Cruzeiro and Boone (2009), suggest that rural school leaders need to understand and value the rural community; this research supports the findings of Cruzeiro and Boone's (2009) study as the new vice-principals entered into the position with a rural background. Six of the eight interviewees are evidence of the success of the "grow your own" initiative.

Addressing the Research Questions

My key research question was: How do newly appointed rural school leaders experience the transition from teaching in the classroom to the vice-principal role? To get to an understanding of their experience, I devised five sub questions to be explored. In this section I will address each sub question before addressing the overall research question.

How do formal supports, including but not limited to, training, professional development, mentoring and coaching programsinform the teachers' transition to the vice-principal role?

The vice-principals in this study outlined a broad range of formal training they received. Through the school board several of the participants completed the Aspiring Leaders program, some more than once. All participants had completed the minimum formal requirements to be a vice-principal, whether that was the double honours specialist at university or the Master's

Degree, along with the Principal's Qualification Program Part I and some completed Part II. As teachers, some of the interviewees had supportive principals who encouraged and supported them as they began their leadership journey into administration. There was no formal mentor or coach program available and the new vice-principals cited this as an area of improvement for the rural school board. Once in the vice-principal role, the principal in the school was thought to be the most formal support the new vice-principal had. Half of the new vice-principals gained leadership training experience through acting in the role of Teacher in Charge (TIC), which is a formal role in that they are appointed by the principal and delegated authority. I found those who acted in the TIC role articulated the importance of learning that occurred in that capacity. Other new vice-principals cited their role as Special Education Resource Teacher to developing their leadership skills and a training ground for administration as it, like the TIC role, allowed teachers to see the bigger picture of the school organization. As for professional development, the eight participants were able to explain their participation in some conferences, school based professional learning communities, and in board level administrative meetings, but articulated their wish to meet on a more regular basis with their vice-principal colleagues.

What type of informal supports do teachers receive in their transition from classroom teacher to vice-principal and how do they inform this process? This study found that the new vice-principals tend to have some informal supports in place as opposed to board-directed formal supports. The new vice-principals created their own personal support networks using former teaching colleagues or administrators, and administrators at other schools. The new vice-principals discussed the importance of having a connection outside of the school to go to in order to seek advice, ask questions, etc. However, the new administrators had to seek out these individuals on their own and make arrangements to connect with them. When it came to mentoring and coaching when in the new vice-principal role, the eight vice-principals were left to their own devices and organized their own personal mentors or support networks, which, upon reflection is an added load to an already stressful transition. They desired more contact with the people in their support network and if this was a formal process then that might be easier to accommodate. The interview data and my field notes demonstrated that distance was noted as a hindrance to getting together with their support network, along with a lack of time. A few of the vice-principals noted that the time had to be right with regards to their home life for them to

enter administration and many stated they did have the appropriate supports at home. It was difficult for the new vice-principals to have teachers in their school as their support system as they are "the boss" and no longer in the teaching circle. The focus for new vice-principals is building the relationships with their staff, which is reflected in the Ontario Leadership Framework.

What challenges do teachers face when transitioning to a vice-principal role? The biggest challenge the new vice-principals experienced is the lack of formal supports and networking opportunities. As I reflected on my field notes, it appears this challenge is tied in with the sense of isolation and loneliness some of the new vice-principals felt. The new vice-principals would like the opportunity to meet with their colleagues and would appreciate a formal mentor program. Along with this challenge was the challenge of learning and taking on a new role. Some described the job as "overwhelming" and others as "exhausting". There is a steep learning curve, which is a challenge when transitioning to a new role. The other challenge new administrators faced is getting to know students, staff, developing professional relationships, and becoming familiar with those in the school, especially in close-knit rural communities. Most vice-principals use the contacts around them, such as the principal, the secretary, or other community members, to learn more about their new working environment. Getting to know the community context is also key and can be a challenge in a rural school. My study indicates the importance of the new administrator having an understandingof the community and get to know what opportunities are available for themselves, staff, and students. Some of the restrictions of the geographic context were challenging for the new vice-principals as they have to deal with transportation issues, weather concerns, and priorities of the rural community.

What impact does the rural context have on new vice-principals? Rural principals contend with different issues than their urban counterparts. One significant issue, as mentioned above and throughout my field notes, is isolation and loneliness. Due to the geographic context and the distance between schools and communities, some new vice-principals feel a sense of isolation from colleagues, networking, and professional development opportunities. There are also job restrictions within the rural school board as new vice-principals will be placed at schools within an hour of their homes, thus limiting access to career opportunities at all schools in the board. The rural geographic context also limits access to Ministry of Education jobs located in urban

centres. Transportation issues were cited as a concern for new vice-principals for themselves driving a long distance to work, as well as a concern when it came to bussing issues and weather matters. There is also a concern that the rural setting may lack resources and opportunities for students, along with a concern about a lack of diversity within the schools. The other issue, which was also outlined earlier, is the emphasis the rural community tends to put on employment outside of school, for example work on the farm. However, the new vice-principals cited technology and communication as one way to overcome some of the barriers the rural context entails. Administrators familiar with the rural communities and rural way of life tend to have an understanding of the school population, the community and the school expectations. In reflection, I recognize that in the rural setting there is an expectation that the administrator become part of the community and it is not uncommon to see staff, students, and parents outside of the school setting. I also acknowledge that the new vice-principals in this study recognize, and are grateful for ,the outdoor educational opportunities available to students in the rural setting.

What are the key roles/duties/portfolios assigned to new rural vice-principals? The new vice-principals are all assigned duties by the school's principal, as per Ontario's Education Act (1990). In this rural school board, the duties are primarily managerial and discipline related, and not necessarily reflected in the Ontario Leadership Framework. The eight vice-principals each held similar duties relating to teacher supervision schedules, supply teacher timetables, medical student forms, school safety, emergency procedures, teacher performance appraisals, and of course dealing with disciplinary issues as they arise. Vice-principals work with teachers in professional learning communities and support teachers in the classroom. In reflection,I think the vice-principals do not yet see themselves in a specific leadership role, rather, they see themselves as a support to the leadership of the principal. The new vice-principals view their work with the principal as a team working together for school improvement.

How do newly appointed rural school leaders experience the transition from teaching in the classroom to the vice-principal role?

I found the new rural vice-principals described their transition in a variety of ways, such as "abrupt", and "exhausting". They provided some suggestions for teachers transitioning into

the vice-principal role. First of all, the new vice-principals noted the importance of gaining leadership experience at the school level in order to build capacity and start to view things in a broader perspective outside the classroom. Once the teachers started to gain the leadership experience, they began to take advantage of existing opportunities and training, such as Aspiring Leaders and acting as Teacher in Charge. The majority of the teachers were employed and received training and leadership experience within this rural school board. At this point, teachers who make the decision to leave teaching for administration begin the socialization and transition process into a leadership role. Each new vice-principal applied to be in the vice-principal pool within the rural school board and once they were placed at a new school the transition truly took shape. At this point in the transition some of the interviewees believe there was a need for an orientation session before entering the new role. The eight interviewees articulated the challenges they faced surrounding the workload and long hours. Some discussed the isolation and loneliness of leaving their teacher colleagues behind and having to forge new relationships. Developing collegial relationships was a bit of a struggle for the new vice-principals and I believe this is because there was no formal mentorship program or network set up by the rural school board. New vice-principals created their own support networks with former principals or colleagues in other schools in order to meet their needs for collegial support. The distance and geographic context was another reason cited as a barrier to networking with colleagues. The bulk of the support new vice-principals received came from their principals. The principals were there to guide them and provide advice. In turn, the vice-principals felt it was their job to support the leadership and vision of the school principal. As for the rural context, the new vice-principal recognized the pros and the cons to working in rural schools. The school setting certainly impacted how they experienced the transition into their new role. In this rural school board and according to the eight vice-principals interviewed, I found the transition into the vice-principal role is fairly positive, with the recognition that there is still a lot to learn and room for professional growth when it comes to leadership skills.

This study outlined the stages of socialization the new vice-principals experience as they leave their teaching role behind and transition into their new leadership role. Transition is a necessary psychological process in order to come to terms with the new situation, in this case the new vice-principal job. It is a process of letting go of the past identity in order to successfully move into a new identity of role. Bridges (2001) outlines three phases one must go through in

order to successfully transition to a new role: the ending, the neutral zone between the old and the new, and lastly embracing the new identity. Armstrong (2009) and Matthews and Crow (2003) outline four stages of socialization: 1) Anticipatory, 2) Encounter, 3) Adjustment, and 4) Stabilization (Armstrong, 2009, p. 19). The new vice-principals in this study have all been through the anticipatory stage as this addresses the pre-arrival and preparation for the job. I would suggest some of the vice-principals in their first year and are still "acting" vice-principals are in the encounter stage of socialization as they are still learning what the job of vice-principal entails. The vice principals early in their second year as vice-principal seem to be in the adjustment phase as they are fitting in and are no longer a new comer. They now have access to privileged information. Those interview participants who are at the end of their second year of experience or who have completed two years as vice-principal have completed the socialization process and are in the stabilization phase of their transition. At this point the vice-principals "are socially and psychologically located within the organizational context" (Armstrong, 2009, p. 20). The vice-principals feel confident and have fully transitioned into their role.

Recommendations for Practice

This study highlights a need for a greater understanding of how vice-principals experience the transition into their new leadership role. All participants agreed that the "sink or swim" approach is not appropriate for new administrators. Appropriate training, supports and mentorship programs need to be in place to help vice-principals be successful in the role. New school leaders require time to meet with their support system in order to learn their new job and ask questions. "New assistant principals also need ongoing support as they come to terms with the feelings of loss associated with giving up their former identity as a teacher and their membership within the teacher reference group" (Armstrong, 2015, p. 131). Participants in this study reiterated the importance of principals as a crucial support system for new vice-principals; this supports Armstrong's (2015) findings. However, some of the participants in this research identified the need to have a more formal support system/mentorship program. "If the trend of public schools is to recruit school principals by growing their own, then an improved program of mentoring assistant principals needs to be in place" (Chan, Webb, & Bowen, 2003, p. 17). Offering an official mentoring program would assist this rural school board to cultivate and support new vice-principals.

The rural school board may improve recruitment and retention strategies by recognizing new vice-principal's feelings of isolation and loneliness and address the issue by implementing a formal mentoring program, which the new vice-principals agreed would be beneficial to assisting their transition into the new role. It would be advantageous to the local school board to offer programs and have strategies in place to curb the feelings of isolation so the new vice-principal has someone to rely on and with whom they can create personal goals and work on stress relieving strategies. To improve the experiences of new vice-principals, school boards would also benefit from having a formal mentor program for new vice-principals which would provide for greater opportunities for new vice-principals to network formally and informally in order to seek advice, share ideas, and reflect on their experiences.

It is imperative that school boards continue to offer relevant training programs, and as Normore (2004) points out, "school boards need to examine more closely the most appropriate training models and experiences for aspiring and practicing school leaders" (p. 112). The rural school board ought to continue to cultivate its future leaders through leadership opportunities and the Aspiring Leaders program. The school board should continue to assistteachers with leadership potential to move into an administrative role within the rural school board as they bring an important understanding about the rural context with them to the new role.It is essential that the rural school board has retention strategies in place in order to retain their administrators beyond the crucial first few years. The rural school board will benefit by continuing the "grow your own" approach to recruiting qualified leadership candidates and retaining vice-principals with key ties to the rural community.

Implications for Further Study

This study contributes to an existing body of research exploring the experiences of new vice-principals. It further develops understanding about how teachers decide to make the move to the vice-principal role and why they choose to become school leaders rather than stay in the classroom. This study gives voice to the experiences of new vice-principals in a specific geographic location. The voices of the vice-principals could serve as the foundation to further investigation into the experiences of school leaders in other rural contexts, as well, it could be the basis of additional recruitment and retention strategies for this particular rural school board, and perhaps others in Ontario. Finally, this research provides some insight as to how the rural context

affects the new vice-principal's transition into the role. The vice-principal's views on the rural setting have an effect on how they do their job and perceive the school and community, thus their transition and socialization into the new role is impacted as a result. The rural school board needs to recognize the uniqueness of the rural context and both the challenges and struggles that new administrators face. This study found that all of the vice-principals had a rural background and understanding of the rural community and six of the eight vice-principals were from within the rural school board, thus demonstrating the "grow your own" approach can be successful. The rural school board in this study would benefit from a purposeful approach to "grow your own" school leaders as they possess the familiarity and understanding of the rural context which greatly benefits rural administrators.

The implications of this research for this school board are relevant as they may provide the basis for change or improvement in identifying leaders, recruiting, retaining school leaders, as well as supporting them once they are on the job. As well, this thesis has implications for further research, policy and practice in other school boards in terms of the growing concern over recruiting and retaining quality leaders, especially in rural locations. By listening to the voices of the new vice-principals, the school board could benefit from further research into issues related to the work and professional development of this group. In particular, further research needs to be conducted in relation to the possible benefits of formal mentor programs and networking opportunities, in order to lessen the new vice-principal's sense of isolation. Seven of the eight vice-principals I interviewed articulated the need for greater networking opportunities with peers and colleagues. Clearly this is an area that warrants further investigation. Policies and programs could be developed by the school board to address the issue of collegial collaboration.

This research represents one rural school board in Southwestern Ontario. Future researchers could expand on this research by including other rural school boards within the province. The rural experience reflected in this study is unlikely to be identical across the province or Canada, but further study provincially or nationally could unearth those similarities and/or differences. This study also focused on new, rural vice-principals in both the elementary and secondary panels. Future researchers may choose to focus only on new vice-principals in one particular panel. Also, the assumptions made in this study may not apply to new administrators in other specific communities, such as Indigenous communities.

This study contributes to an existing body of research concerning how new vice-

principals experience the transition into their new role. The research is significant in that it focuses on narratives of rural vice-principals in Southwestern Ontario, rather than on urban vice-principals. It further highlights the need to listen to the voices of vice-principals in order to understand their experiences within a specific geographic location. The research outlines the pathway new administrators take into their new role and clearly outlines the challenges faced and supports received along the way. The task for the rural school board is to find ways of discussing concerns and addressing the issues new vice-principals brought forth in this study. Appropriate supports and programs need to be available to assist new vice-principals in the job. Finally, the school board must acknowledge the transition that new vice-principals encounter and the influence the rural context has on the administrative role. More work and research needs to be conducted in order to enhance the experience of classroom teachers who decide to take on the role of vice-principal in a rural school.

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Appendix A

Western Research

Research Ethics

Western University Health Science Research Ethics Board
NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Augusto Riveros Barrera
Department & Institution: Education, Western University

NMREB File Number: 106789
Study Title: Exploring the Transition from Teaching to Leading in Rural Schools: A Case Study
Sponsor:

NMREB Initial Approval Date: July 07, 2015
NMREB Expiry Date: July 07, 2016

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Recruitment Items	Email script	2015/05/21
Revised Western University Protocol		2015/06/18
Revised Letter of Information & Consent		2015/06/16
Recruitment Items	Revised Recruitment Email	2015/06/16
Instruments	Revised Interview Questions	2015/06/16

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Ethics Officer, on behalf of Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair or delegated board member

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

Erika Basile	Grace Kelly	Mina Mekhail	Vikki Tran
ebasile@uwo.ca	grace.kelly@uwo.ca	mmekhail@uwo.ca	vikki.tran@uwo.ca

This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

Western University, Research, Support Services Bldg., Rm. 5150
London, ON, Canada N6G 1G9 t. 519.661.3036 f. 519.850.2466 www.uwo.ca/research/ethics

Appendix B

Email Script for Recruitment

Subject Line: Invitation to participate in research

You are being invited to participate in a study that we, Dr. Gus Riveros, and Julie Hohner, are conducting. The study involves exploring the transition from classroom teachers to vice-principal because you are a new vice-principal hired within the last two years in a rural school board. You will be asked to meet at a mutually agreed upon location for a face-to-face interview. We will meet one time and the interview will take approximately one hour. The interview will be audio recorded.

I have attached a letter of information which provides more detail about the study. If you would like more information regarding this study, please contact the researcher, Julie Hohner, at the contact information given below.

Thank you,

Julie Hohner
Western University
xxxx@uwo.ca

Appendix C

Project Title: Exploring the Transition of Teaching to Leading in a Rural Schools: A Case Study

Principal Investigator: Dr. Gus Riveros, Faculty of Education, Western University
Student Researcher: Julie Hohner, EdD Student, Faculty of Education, Western University

Letter of Information

1. **Invitation to Participate**

   You are being invited to participate in this research study exploring the transition from classroom teachers to vice-principal because you are a new vice-principal hired within the last two years in a rural school board.

2. **Purpose of the Letter**

   The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information require for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

3. **Purpose of this Study**

   The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that influence the decision to make the move into a vice-principal role. It also hopes to describe the specific experiences of new leaders as they transition from the classroom into administration. The study will examine the supports, education, and training received prior to entering the leadership role. This research study will also outline the in-role experiences of new vice-principal.

4. **Inclusion Criteria**

   1. Elementary and secondary vice-principals working in the public school system in the selected school board are eligible to participate in this study.
   2. Elementary and secondary vice-principals in the role two years or less (year one as an "acting" vice-principal, year two as a permanent position) are eligible to participate in this study.
   3. Only potential participants who agree to be audio recorded will be eligible to

participate in this study.

5. **Exclusion Criteria**

1. Individuals who are not vice-principals in the selected school board are not eligible to participate in this study.
2. Individuals with more than two years of experience in the vice-principal role are not eligible to participate in this study.
3. Individuals who do not agree to be audio recorded will not be eligible to participate in this study.

6. **Study Procedures**

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview. It is anticipated the entire interview will take one hour, for one session. The interview will take place at a mutually convenient location. There will be a total of 12 participants in the study. Each participant will be given a numerical code to identify them to the researchers. This code will be stored separately from the raw data. This will allow the research team identify themes and patterns.

7. **Possible Risks or Harms**

There are no foreseen risks associated to participating in the study. The interview can be stopped at any time should the participant experience fatigue or discomfort.

8. **Possible Benefits**

The research study will support the work of newly appointed rural elementary and secondary vice-principals and it will be a resource available to them as they transition into the new leadership role. It will be possible for school boards to develop the support mechanisms and resources needed in the journey. Other school leaders, principals, superintendents, and directors may be interested in the benefit from a study of this nature; they will be able to assess their leadership programs and improve them to support the vice-principals' transition process.

9. **Compensation**

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

10. **Voluntary Participation**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time.

11. **Confidentiality**

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. If the results are published, your name will not be used. *If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database.* While we will do our best to protect your information, there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so.

 *Representatives of Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may contact you or require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

12. Contacts for Further Information

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study, you may contact the principal investigator, Dr. Gus Riveros at _____ extension 85205 or xxxx@uwo.ca. You may also contact Julie Hohner at _____ or xxxx@uwo.ca.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics _____, email: xxxxs@uwo.ca.

13. Publication

If the results of this study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please provide your name and contact number of a separate piece of paper from the consent form.

14. Consent

Written Consent
Please see and sign the consent form.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Appendix D

<u>Consent Form</u>

Project Title: Exploring the Transition of Teaching to Leading in a Rural Schools: A Case Study

Principal Investigator's Name: Dr. Gus Riveros, Faculty of Education, Western University
Student Researcher: Julie Hohner, Ed D student Faculty of Education, Western University

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Participant's Name (please print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

☐   I agree to be audio recorded.

Appendix E

Interview Questions

The interview will focus on the following questions:

Setting the Context:

1. How long have you been a vice-principal?
2. Describe the school in which you work.

Pre-administration:

1. What did you teach before becoming a vice-principal?
2. Whey did you decide to leave the classroom for administration?
3. What experience did you have in administration before taking on the vice-principal job?
4. What type of training or education did you receive before transitioning to administration?

On the Job Support:

1. Did you receive any mentoring/coaching as you entered your new role?
2. Has any kind of professional development has been offered or provided in your new role as vice-principal?
3. Have you been exposed to any networking opportunities have you been exposed to thus far?

Relationships:

1. How are you developing your relationships with staff?
2. How are you developing your relationships with students?
3. How are you developing relationships with the school community?
4. What initiatives have you taken to build the capacity of your staff?

Job Description:

1. What do you see as your key role within the school?
2. What are your duties as a vice-principal?

Rural Issues:

1. Do you think there are issues you contend with that your urban counterparts would not have to deal with? Explain.
2. Do you feel limited in anyway by the geographic restrictions of the rural context?

Leadership:

1. How would you describe your leadership style?

2. Are their supports you wish you had in place to support you as a new leaders?
3. How would you describe your transition from teaching to leading?
4. Do you have any advice for teachers who may be thinking about making the transition from teacher to leader?

Curriculum Vitae

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Post-secondary   Carleton University
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Degrees: 1993-1994 Journalism Program

The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
1994-1997 B. A. (Hons.)

Daemen College
Amherst, New York, United States
2000-2001 Professional Program in Education

University of Western Ontario
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2007-2011 M. Ed.

Related Work   Teacher
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Publications:
Hohner, J. (2011).*Exploring the Rural Construction of Masculinity andBoys' Engagement with Schooling.* (Master's thesis). University of Western Ontario, London.