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AN AXIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF
SHARED PURPOSE AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

By

Robert Baranoski

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of

Olivet Nazarene University

School of Graduate and Continuing Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of

Doctor of Education

in

Ethical Leadership


May 2011

AN AXIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF
SHARED PURPOSE AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

by

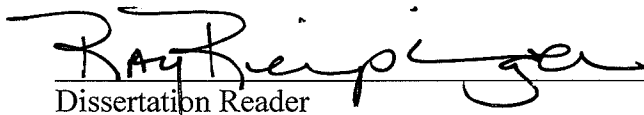
Robert Baranoski

Dissertation



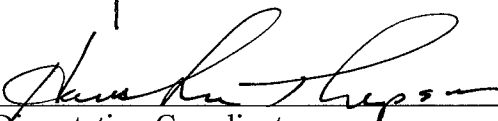
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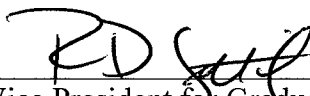
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I wish to thank my family, friends, feathers and teachers for their support and patience; but in particular I wish to thank my father, who passed away during this journey, for being my first teacher.

ABSTRACT

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In this dissertation, I inquired into the relationship of shared purpose and academic excellence. Beginning with an understanding and investigation into the axiology of shared purpose and academic performance, the research reviewed and synthesized scholarly literature for contextual facts. Following analyses, a quantitative explanatory method was undertaken to measure correlation of the variables. An examination of the findings supports a relationship between shared purpose and academic excellence. More importantly, it yields further investigation into purpose as a linchpin to performance in public education.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The really fundamental questions of our schools are not questions of test scores or finance, but an inquiry into purpose, value, and excellence. In the early part of the 20th century, John Dewey argued for the education of the “whole” person (Dewey, 1916, p. 234); some decades later, George W. Bush, the 43rd President of the United States, pledged to support increased funds for purposeful character instruction as a result of the study on public education (“No Child Left Behind Act,” 2002). Quality education became the focus of a great deal of attention by educators, ultimately the result of recognition of a decline in the performance of public education (Lickona, 1992) and the urging of former Secretary of Education William Bennett (1993) and former Secretary of Education Richard Riley (2000). This study considered two important attributes of quality education; shared purpose and academic excellence (Lickona & Davidson, 2005).

For some time, there has been a growing awareness of the fact that for many students, the school system may be the only place where purpose and ethical values such as respect, fairness, and caring are experienced. For those students in particular, as well as the rest, school is where students learn responsibility, trustworthiness and citizenship along with literacy and numeracy. However, over time, the efforts of educating have been confronted by an unhappy paradox. The prevailing tendencies of schools to develop the scholar may have indeed fragmented or reduced the functional rationality of shared, purposeful education programming. For educators and the children they serve, the single

determinant of a school's genuine value has become test scores (Stiggins, 2005). As suitable exemplars, schools find themselves obligated to cultivate virtuous persons while simultaneously accomplishing academic objectives. Often, the harmonious coexistence is not possible. Test scores are objective and essential, extremely useful in defining a level of performance. Shared purpose is subjective and essential, establishing standards and expectations for all members. Paradoxically, purposeful character and academics are not exclusive of each other. They are complementary, providing worth and responsibility to the very system they represent.

Davidson and Lickona (2005) published a report, that led to a proposed paradigm shift in the way researchers think about purpose and education. Realizing that character is predominantly important to conduct; it's also about excellence and effort in all endeavors, the study redefined the fundamentals of character to include both purpose and performance as agents of quality improvement. Davidson, Lickona and Khmelkov (2007) determined that education has two components: performance, consisting of qualities that enable us to achieve to our highest potential in any performance environment, and purpose, consisting of qualities that enable us to be our ethical best in relationships and roles (Davidson, Lickona & Khmelkov, 2007).

Meaning and goals are central and crucial for cultivating a commitment to the value and purpose of schooling. Axiological theorists claim that there is a conceptual connection between values and obligation (Findlay, 1970). Fundamentally, axiologists would pose the question, "What kind of school should we strive to be?" The intent of the current study was to examine evidence of the relationship of shared purpose to a school's goal of academic achievement. Academic excellence has meaning when the stakeholders

in a learning community have a purpose that justifies their strivings. Purpose is critical to excellence. Senge (1990) stated that shared purpose is a place where stakeholders continually expand their capacity to create results they truly desire (p. 241). Establishing shared purpose in schools establishes focus and goals; purpose builds a collective standard and creates a sense of stability in a system where knowledge is temporary and changing (Dietz, 2002). If acquisition of knowledge and reason are the goals of schooling, then the accountability and responsibility of purpose can be a frame for the process and relevance of the achievement.

Educators recognize the interdependence of purpose and performance in the development of the taxonomy of educational objectives. In developing the taxonomy of the affective domain, Bloom and Krathwohl tried first to understand the process involved in the acquisition and internalization of attitudes, interests, and preferences (Lee, 1999). Social contexts and relationships are essential for the motivation and talent development of students (Csikszentmihalyi, Ratunde, & Whalen, 1993). The variation in student achievement may appear to derive from a sense of purpose. Through a deliberate and systematic focus on high academic achievement and a continuously practiced galvanized vision of achievement objectives; shared purpose provides a pathway to performance. Purpose, shared and identified cultivates personal attributes that are linked to performance (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003).

The distinction between purpose, vision, and performance does not imply what is distinguished is thereby separated. Purpose is the foundation of excellence, performance is the goal and vision is the force (Goodpaster, 2004). He further stated that the value of each is found in the associated worth held by the group. In this study, the group is

identified as staff, students, and teachers. From the distinctive commitment to purpose come the core values of the group. One such value is academic excellence. Academics may be the most significant function of schooling. It is the one value that reflects and encompasses the full range of skills and capabilities of the group.

Using the character attribute of shared purpose for all school activities, a clarity and lack of ambiguity is established. The purpose, often identified in a school's mission statement, creates meaning and motivation by establishing a desired degree of performance. Shared purpose and commitment, continually reinforced, will create a culture of achievement in schools (Doherty, 2003).

Statement of the Problem

The problem is essentially axiological, focused on the relative values of a school system. As the study sought evidence of the relationship of shared purpose on academic excellence; research discovered much dissension surrounding the direction of educational practice and the demands of academic accountability. Extraordinary focus on ACT/SAT scores and AYP has not been the solution for failing schools. Wagner and Benavente-McEnery (2006) found that the misunderstood purpose and failed solutions of educators resulted from the lost sense of general agreement on processes and practices. The solution to achieving pragmatically issued goals, such as high ACT/SAT scores or positive AYP status, involves stakeholders agreeing on matters of purpose to provide significance to whatever the stakeholder does.

Together with recognizable goals, purpose provides more than a starting point. Purpose is the cartography of practice, establishing meaning to help navigate the process. Researchers have already linked the importance of shared purpose to improving school

behaviors. Less delinquency, less violence, less absenteeism, and less substance abuse, are goals met by school systems due in part to character education that guides with shared purpose. Resnick et al. (1997) found that school connections, that fully supports all stakeholders, improves behavior and reduces risky behaviors. By attending to a shared purpose and identity, commitment and assurance become fundamental to the values of the stakeholder (Davidson, Lickona & Khmelkov, 2007).

When stakeholders see that regardless of their individual talents, they can actively make a contribution to the whole system, learners and teachers become charged with inspiration and passion. One must consider that the outcome of academic performance is inextricably bound to the values of each and every member. Learning is knowing with a purpose. The systematic study of acquired facts is a central part of the educational agenda. The quality of learning, in light of recent tendency, is measured almost exclusively on educational outcomes (Biesta, 2009). Yet, schools can produce quality work only to the degree that they simultaneously encourage the development of shared purpose among their members (Torbert, 1978).

Ultimately, it is not so much that shared purpose is not attended to, but rather that is not being recognized as an inspiring force in academic performance. If recognized, through a continuous and systematic focus on this positive character attribute, shared purpose may create a whole-school effort that results in desired academic excellence.

Background

Historically, in cultures around the world, education had two great goals: helping students become smart and helping students become good (Davidson, Lickona & Khmelkov, 2007). To this day, considerable controversy surrounds the impact of character on schools. While character-related challenges, such as behavior infractions and peer cruelty exist as influencing factors on the school culture, the influence of character on academic achievement seems less clear. “We haven’t made a strong case for the relevance of character education to all phases of school life, including academic learning” (Davidson, Lickona, & Khmelkov, p. 31).

Factors that influence academic excellence are varied and wide. Positive self-concept and general competence are correlated with better grades and test scores (Sapp, 1990). A strong sense of belonging to their school (Mahan & Johnson, 1983) and participation in school activities are seen as beneficial to academic performance. Behavior problems such as absences and discipline referrals effect academic achievement (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986). Even problems with relationships may cause academic problems in adolescence (Lambert, 1988).

An important development in recent years is the awareness that effective learning involves participation and sharing by both teacher and student. Highly involved students (National Commission on Children, 1991) increased the value of learning and provided an environment of rich stimulus. Students who have access to a wide variety of resources, opportunities to participate in their learning, and who are advocates for the school’s mission expanded the educational process beyond the traditional classroom.

Examining the various aspects of how a school defines the role of learners, the relationship between purpose and achievement is quickly and consistently apparent. For instance, a school atmosphere of disruption and disorder negatively impacts learning (National Commission on Children, 1991). Further, according to this commission, a school that lacks leadership and direction can impact and detour academic achievement. Learner interests, expectations, and performance are personal and pertain to the character of the individual; yet, it is the companionship and purpose of schooling that provides the identity and meaning for the individual.

In discussing the principles of learning, psychologists and educators give great importance to the concept of goals as a link to the significance of a task. Individual goals that are linked to ultimate goals give importance to whatever a person does (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). There is a consensus with respect to learner participation and unity of purpose (Collins, 1998). Goal directed actions that provide meaning actively move individuals from singular task involvement to deeper levels of participation (Allport, 1955). “The most important law of learning, is a case for interest, being the strongest of all. Interest is participation with the deepest level of motivation” (Allport, 1961, p. 106). The coherent, focused construct of shared purpose helps all members of the school to experience excellence at the same level.

One particularly important function of schooling is to form the intentions and goals that give purpose to one’s life. This distinctively human characteristic of goal setting first begins in adolescence. “Propriate striving,” strictly speaking, is giving purpose to the goals one sets (Allport, 1955, p. 29). An adolescent appreciation for academic excellence may not be a character trait that is well developed or expressed. Not

surprisingly, society has seen fit to compel schools to become the guide to purpose and success. Unfortunately, the power to purpose and motivation has become the growing dependence on test scores (Stiggins, 2005).

Axiologically speaking to the value as well as the acceptance of a system (Findlay, 1970), purpose has been heavily influenced by the fundamental policy choices of schools and their respective districts. The vision and purpose of schooling has often been reduced to a series of standardized tests and grade point averages. The character of education is as relevant as the data used to identify the performance of each student. Axiologically, the empirical work of this analysis is a preliminary investigation into the very complex relation of shared purpose on the demands of academic achievement. The many commonly held perspectives that schools do have an influence on individual student achievement (Weisher & Peng, 1993) raises serious attention to the value of a central position on purpose.

Clearly, formative assessment is here to stay. It has become the gold standard and evidence of each student's mastery of learning (Stiggins, 2005). Ideally, if the purpose and goals of the school could become the common thread and greatest common factor to student achievement; the variance of achievement within and across schools may lessen. The value in assessment may be seen simply as a pathway to excellence and not a benchmark, test scores may become an antecedent rather than an outcome. The taxonomy of educational production and achievement may include a new measure of broader effects, one beyond the influence of scores, resulting from the common interpretation of the mission statement.

A variety of school values have been used as exemplars of educational quality, but not necessarily in an effort to promote academic achievement. Throughout the centuries, character education can be traced back to the very beginning of our nation's history. During the 1600s educators supported traditional teaching skills that focused on reading, writing, and arithmetic. In addition, traditionalism reflected on the importance and necessity of character values (Vardin, 2003) such as respect, loyalty, and responsibility. By the 1880s new challenges of a growing nation crept into the halls of education. Increasing enrollment, a more industrial society, and the influence of a public school education would prompt educators to develop codes of conduct and the preliminary designs of a character education concept (McClellan, 1999).

The approach to social development became more crucial and essential to a growing population in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. Besides teaching for knowledge and skills, educators began to understand that their role and responsibility evolved beyond curriculum and into citizenship. Duties, rights, and privileges shaped the body of knowledge for the culturally and socially literate. In this era of Essentialism, educators stressed the moral and intellectual values necessary to becoming model citizens (Bagley & Keith 1934). Essentialist teachers promoted students only if they demonstrated mastery of all the required skills, believing that test results provided the benchmarks for process and knowledge.

Perhaps Ryan and Cooper (2004) best articulated the Essentialist purpose:

The ability to think straight, some knowledge of the past, some vision of the future, some skill to do useful service, some urge to fit that service into the well-

being of the community—these are the most vital things education must try to produce. (p. 276)

The next movement in educational policy shared similarities with Essentialism, but expressed the need to develop the intellect in learners. Perennialism's focus on cultivating rationality and reason reflected the goal of educators in the 1920s. During this time period, character education's purpose took the form of codes of conduct. Schools took a major interest in the role of character formation (Field & Nickell, 2000). The Perennialist claim that human nature is universal in its essential characteristics provided educators with a basis for their character education instruction. The basic characteristics appear and reappear generation after generation and though cultural particulars exist, our values derive from our rationality and reason. A cultivation of fundamental skills and an understanding of the great works of civilization are the essential goals and purpose of education (Hutchins, 1936).

Along with the intellectual values of Perennialism, character education made a very significant impact. "Educators expected moral codes to prompt teachers to attend to the development of character and to provide themes for instruction" (McClellan, 1999, p. 51). Perennialists' conceptual style of instruction-guided teaching was well linked to the approaches and attitudes of the early character education curriculum. While looking into the educational values of this period, an axiological analysis would require one to ask what a school system would regard as worthwhile and purposeful. The Perennialist would answer that the purpose of schooling would be to cultivate rational behaviors and academic excellence (Pazmio, 1997). A genuine purpose can only be realized when a

person leads a moral life and actualizes their potential through reason (Morris & Pai, 1976).

Purposeful education, at this time, was more about character development and less about the principles of moral behavior. The absolutes of what is right or wrong behavior began to give way to shaping the will of students. This approach was the early foundation of contemporary quality education programs, as Progressivism of the early 20th century took hold. This educational philosophy, linked to Dewey, was first introduced in the 1920s, and focused on the individual student and an emphasis on academic and social awareness. Progressivism took a broad view of education and shared development. In addition to curriculum, school culture and school traditions began to overlap into character education approaches (Wren, 1999).

Progressivists were very cognizant of needs of the student. Schools became more child-centered and instruction was provided with the learner in mind. Dewey (1938) and other educators wished to engage the critical, socially-obligated intelligence of individuals actively. The concept of Progressive education began to undergo a decline in favor, most notably during the late 1940s and into the early 1950s. The anxiety regarding the cold war and a turn to cultural conservatism encouraged educators to reflect on character education once again. To utilize the public school system to reflect on moral purpose and values was indeed to recognize the teachable moment of this time in history.

As time transitioned the ever changing needs of American society, one thing was becoming more evident to educators: school is an agent of society. The specialized function of educating is uniquely woven into the purpose and interests of the society it represents. To help students understand and appreciate themselves depends on the ability

to cultivate skills and methods that will help them to interact successfully with their environment (Knight, 1982). To educate a useful and competent person to society was a grand approach to learning, but the recognition of the practical aspects of schooling could not be neglected. There was the matter of curriculum and subject understanding.

The broad framework of the Progressive movement focused on the student as the learner rather than on the subject matter. As critics found fault in a system that paid too much attention to the learner and not what was to be learned, a more structured behaviorist dimension was evident. The accountability movement took root in the late 1960s and began to operate fully in school systems in the 1970s. As parents and communities began to appreciate the role of education in terms of successful lives for their children, policy makers began to develop ways to evaluate successful educational achievements (Paris, 1995).

As Progressivism's influence was to "lift the heavy hand of traditionalism and role mastery from public schools and to turn the business of learning into a more lifelike, meaningful activity on the part of teacher and student" (Morris, 1961, p. 339), the Behaviorist philosophy of education focused on observable measures of mastery. The Behaviorist movement reaffirmed the Essentialists or Traditionalists, so dominant in the early American educational systems, by focusing on the need to build basic knowledge that is fundamental to each and every American youth. This focus became the claim for a return to basic education.

Over time, character education gradually continued its role of shaping and influencing the educational process by considering the totality of values that best improves the school's condition. "The conscious attempt to help others acquire the

knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that contribute to more personally satisfying and socially constructive lives” (Kirschenbaum, 1995, p. 14), provided the aims and ideals for action. Through significance and action, academics and character shared a link, regardless of philosophies or ideals. Axiologically, both impacted the course of educating students by providing fundamental dimensions of value.

During the latter half of the Twentieth Century, Americans began demanding schools that emphasized high-level academics and cognitive skills, often at the expense of character education resources (McClellan, 1999). As American society was in the midst of cultural upheaval, so too were cultural values also in flux. Many educators treated character education with caution or ambiguity. The emphasis on moral development as a component of curriculum was carefully examined by character education opponents. A more complex and relative perspective about values was taking place in American’s schools.

With commitment to values clarification, there was an emphasis on the reflective, intrinsic approach to character education (Vessels, 1998). While values clarification referenced the mood of the 1960s and 1970s, it too drew investigation by educational professionals. The early public school system, relying primarily on the codes of civic values, fueled criticisms of values clarification. “Values clarification makes no distinction between what you might want to do and what you ought to do” (Lickona, 1992, p. 11). The standards and virtues of a community, readily agreed upon, constitute the curriculum of shared purpose (Bennett, 1993).

Even during an era when the concept of character education and shared purpose appeared under attack by a society’s changing values, the role of educating its children

was seriously and responsibly evident. Learning and intellectual development were often the focus of policy makers and politicians. Performance-indicator systems were introduced to confirm students' learning outcomes empirically. Institutional expenditures were correlated to documented gains in student learning (Ram, 2004) and school-based assessments became vital to school improvement (Forum on Educational Accountability, 2007).

Standardized tests became the primary quality assurance benchmarks of educational accountability in recent years. To improve the academic performance of its schools, states and school districts were encouraged to establish improvement goals that could be empirically determined. The notion of federal assistance and sanctions aligned with test scores affected the existing reform efforts (Forum on Educational Accountability, 2007). Students, teachers, administrators, local and state communities and the federal government continued to view test scores as evidence that a school system was meeting criteria concerning its quality. Some critics of testing charged that a test's evaluative criteria fails to relate the many accomplishments of students who do not perform well and, for the most part, makes little accommodation for disadvantaged learners. Despite opponents' pleas, public confidence and professional practice appears rather comfortable with the assumptions surrounding this empirical measurement.

Though evidence of academic excellence must rely on many measures of achievement, the educational quality as measured by empirically-supported guidelines in standardized testing provides the current research with the reliability and validity criteria necessary for a plausible correlational study of shared vision and academic excellence. Researchers do caution those who use test results to decide on benchmarks for excellence

that other school characteristics may have an effect on academic outcomes (Stiggins, 2005). Student achievement may be the result of many conditions and resources. Society cannot abandon the notion that the quality of a school system hinges on the fundamental commitments and obligations of its stakeholders.

With the resurgence of quality, character education, due mostly to reactions to school violence, truancy, and dropouts, school systems are once again correcting moral purpose in the development of students (Was, Woltz, & Drew, 2006). In their critique on existing research, Was et al. stated:

Although character education in schools throughout the U.S. has been a point of contention and debate for many decades, character education is making a strong comeback in response to these figures. Currently, in the U.S. there is a push for character education at the level of primary and secondary education. During the fiscal years of 1995-2001, 45 states had grants from the U.S. federal government under the Character Education Pilot Project Grand Program (United States Department of Education, 2006). Character education was included as a feature of the No Child Left Behind Act (United States Department of Education, 2006), leading to a compulsory agenda to develop character education curricula. (p. 150)

Assuming what has been stated is true, that character education is once again a course of action for school systems, and that the business of schools remains to educate, an inquisitive mind might wonder, does shared purpose, an attribute of character education, subsequently impact learning? Is it possible to analyze the value of purpose and vision as a quantifiable benefit to academic excellence? The clarity of a school system's purpose and outcomes is often identified in the mission statement that express a

pledge to high expectations for both learners and teachers (Lickona & Davidson, 2005).

Although mission statements appear to be popular as an image of quality and institutional prestige, can we assume they are valuable to student learning and academic achievement?

It is this relation between shared purpose and academic excellence that provides the framework for research.

Factors that influence learning outcomes are varied and numerous, but perhaps the most pertinent functions are those that directly and significantly express purpose.

Character education and the distinctive moral qualities featured have been at the core of schooling, as is evident in schools' oldest mission statements (Schaeffer, 1999). School systems perform under the burden and totality of values created by the communities they represent. Strong collaborative character education efforts provide a guide to students through inspiration and encouragement (Beauchum & McCraym 2001).

The influence of community values, presumably expressed in the mission statement of its school systems, is fundamental to the relations between purpose and achievement. Excellence is the resulting by-product of maintaining a link between shared purpose and academic achievement. Allport (1955) clearly defined aim and duty to stipulate specified action, "When the individual is dominated by segmental drives, by compulsion, or by winds of circumstances, he has lost the integrity that comes only from maintaining major directions of striving" (p. 50).

Purpose, like knowledge, is fundamental to schooling. It is in the value of purpose that both individual learners and the community of learners can achieve the goals and objectives of each. It is this collaborative collection that provides the conditions for excellence. The notions of shared purpose and academics have each played a part in

educating students, but mostly in an unrelated fashion. Learning is crucial to educating, but what would the experience be like for teachers and students if shared purpose was a prompt? Could more effective learning be simply and paradoxically a comprehensive purpose that links well-designed instruction with well-designed meaning? As already mentioned, an axiological analysis devotes itself to explaining the world by values, both practical and theoretical. It is emerging and significant to research the represented value of purpose and academics. More significantly, perhaps, is how important it is to understand the unique elements of how the values of purpose and excellence are instrumental to the systematized practice of quality education.

Hypothesis

This study was inclined to adopt an empirical approach: that our knowledge of things derives basically from our experiences. The idea that shared purpose correlates to academic excellence is perhaps pure conjecture, if not outright rubbish. From a qualitative point of view, we may agree that character qualities such as purpose could indeed relate to academic performance, yet this study is essentially quantitative. Instead of seeing in terms of qualities, this research was conducted in terms of measurement. Undeniably theoretical, the researcher chose to introduce an element of clarity by stating a null hypothesis. The hypothesis statements are:

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between shared purpose and ACT Assessment Scores.

Alternative Hypothesis 1: There is significant relationship between shared purpose and ACT Assessment scores.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between shared purpose and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status.

Alternative Hypothesis 2: There is significant relationship between shared purpose and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status.

Shared purpose, as an antecedent to academic outcomes, may simply contribute and be understood as elemental to only character education.

However, as speculative as the relationship is, personal reflection of one's own accomplishments may lead to an appreciation of collective purpose.

Inasmuch as education prepares each person for a life of excellence it leads as well to a better shared community of responsibility (Wagner & Benavente-McEnery, 2006, p. 10).

Data shows a remarkable emphasis on the measurement of educational performance, mostly intended to identify achieving school systems. Without the springboard of collective purpose to inspire and motivate stakeholders, would significant performance accomplishments be evident? Quantitative studies in the field of character education have related the significance of shared purpose on improved school behaviors; evidence of these studies may bode well for the future investigations of shared purpose and improved school academics (Lickona & Davidson, 2005).

Description of Terms

Academic Achievement. "Student achievement encompasses student ability and performance; it is multidimensional; it is intricately related to human growth and cognitive, emotional, social, and physical development; it reflects the whole child; it is not related to a single instance, but occurs across time and levels, through a student's life in public school." (Steinberger, 1993, p. 12). To determine achievement educators, students, and parents have turned to diagnostic information provided by standardized tests. (Wolf, Bixby, Glenn, & Gardener, 1991).

Axiology. Axiology is the conscious quest for values and purposive actions (Hart, 1971). Axiology in education encompasses a range of actions that attempts to understand how, why, and to what degree of importance are certain actions, intentions, and deeds. This research is concerned with values that are shared by the community and fundamental to the goals of academic excellence.

Shared Purpose. Shared purpose is the “social cohesion,” that is, the common beliefs, shared activities, and caring relations that are tightly aligned toward achievement goals (Shouse, 1996).

Significance of Study

It can reasonably be argued, from an axiological point of view, that there is value to purpose. Similarly, from an axiological point of view, it is reasonable to recognize the value of excellence in what we do. School systems are concerned with and value academic performance. This is evident in the objectivity of standardized testing and ranking; also in tandem with state mandated annual yearly progress reporting.

School systems are also grounded in ideals and ends; and they often appear in places like mission statements or standards. Often a school system distinguishes itself by its all embracing purpose or theism, I currently attend such a school. School systems that ascribe performance on standards based on shared purpose and vision, are sanctioned or reputable based on regional accreditation;. I currently sit on a quality assurance team that ranks the shared purpose and vision of school systems for the intent of accreditation.

The question arises, of course, is there a necessary relation between purpose and excellence. The background research has already noted that value does exist in both purpose and excellence, expressed in the evaluation of each. This study calls attention to

the operative unity of shared purpose and academic excellence; therein lies the significance, a synthesis of intention and performance.

Recently, principals once again called attention to the qualities central to educating children. Standardized testing was evaluated as a meaningful benchmark of yearly academic progress; but other qualities such as motivation, confidence, “ and responsibility were defined as purposive and valued, yet not assessed via testing (Hoerr, 2009). As Torbert (1978) contends “to educate toward shared purpose and quality work is simultaneously educative and productive” (p. 113).

Significance differs in how central or peripheral values are with respect to a system. One midwestern Christian University, as in other school systems, academics and teaching are framed within the first sentence of the mission statement, “Education with a Christian Purpose.” This university proudly states this is more than a motto, but a mission, that is at the heart of superior academics. This shared purpose has bonded 20,000 graduates into a community of scholars, yet I have come to understand that statements and policy do not account for success to any degree. This research will discover what some imply we already know--the connection is suggestive and perhaps compelling but not evident.

Process to Accomplish

The goal of the study was to analyze two sets of data by developing and employing a hypothesis pertaining to shared purpose and academic excellence in Illinois public high schools. The process used North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement rubric to measure vision and shared purpose and ACT school average/Adequate Yearly Progress status reports from the Illinois School

Report Card to measure academic performance. In the study, the null hypothesis indicated there was no significant relationship between the characterized shared purpose and academic excellence. The result of the study enabled the researcher to either: 1) reject the null hypothesis, or 2) fail to reject the null hypothesis.

To be considered for the study, the following criteria and indicators identified the constructs: 1) the public high school was listed in the published educational directory for the state of Illinois; 2) the school sought and received regional accrediting approval from North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement; 3) the school published and provided guidelines that characterized why they exist and how they engaged in creating a future of excellence; 4) the school released as required by state and federal laws, a report card with published academic performance averages from ACT assessment testing; and 5) the adequate Yearly Progress status report from the Illinois School Report Card documenting academic growth of meeting/exceeding standards was released.

The sampling procedure involved sample selection of every public high school in the state of Illinois. The only limits on the possible inclusion in the study were not being accredited by North Central or not publishing an Illinois School Report Card. Simple random sampling was selected to reduce the bias and avoid a deliberate selection of schools that would confirm the hypothesis. At the time of the study, standards assessment on vision and purpose and ACT/AYP assessment on academic performance were the known and recognized sources of information for measurement and evaluation.

Analysis of variance, ANOVA, was used to provide measures of the correlation between a school's purpose and vision and ACT assessment scores. A one-way, between

groups ANOVA measured the dependent variable (DV) outcome of ACT performance and the independent variable (IV) quality of the school's shared purpose categorized into four independent nominal groups. The North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) indicators rubric identified and categorized shared purpose into four groups of performance. The four independent variables for comparison were: 1) not evident shared purpose, 2) emerging shared purpose, 3) operational shared purpose, and 4) highly functional shared purpose.

The second selection of correlation was shared purpose and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status as reported by the State of Illinois School Report Card. A one-way, between groups ANOVA was used to measure the dependent variable (DV) outcome of AYP status. The independent variable (IV) was the four independent nominal groups, as identified by NCA CASI standards, for shared purpose.

Summary descriptions are presented in tables and appendixes in the methodology and findings chapters. Further descriptive information, including a narrative of methodological and contextual analysis is discussed as well. ANOVA statistical analysis was performed by SPSS software.

CHAPTER II

THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” Henry Ford (as cited in Lick & Murphy, 2006, p. 11).

Purpose, a function we most often attribute to individuals, actually can represent the quality mark of educational systems (Doherty, 2003). Educational systems do not exist in a vacuum, nor do they depend on a single individual. Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon (2001) found that quality school systems, those with a long, distinguished legacy of academic excellence, depend on the central and peripheral priorities of the community. In 1971, Commoner published a classic expression of some surprising consequences of multiple, interconnected systems that in any correlated system, everything is basically connected to everything. Benathy (1991) presented the notion that human beings are the most valued quality of an ideal system and it is the value-based ideals of user participation that should guide the activities and process. To ensure participation of benefactors and beneficiaries, particular purpose is a construct that supports and enables the participation of individuals in the context of an entire system (Jenlick, 2004). By creating a collective worldview of shared meaning, we intentionally invest each member in the educational system through authentic engagement and function of common thinking (Benathy, 1992).

The realization of how important shared purpose is for school systems was suggested by the data collected in the works of Lickona and Davidson (2005). Their

research, especially on shared purpose, communicated this new paradigm for quality and excellence in school systems. “The development of shared purpose and identity is the first and arguably most important learning community principle” (Lickona & Davidson, p. 65). Additionally, data from Ingels, Pratt, Rogers, Siegel and Stutts, (2004) showed that the most effective schools have a strong sense of academic purpose that binds and defines stakeholders. From a student perspective, Damon (2002) has analyzed the development of purpose during high school adolescence and discovered the potentially unified effect of immersion into a defined goal. The goals we pursue are not determined in advance or built into our makeup, they are discovered in the extension of our skills and the purpose of our strivings (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

The difficulty, of course, with shared purpose is the set of theoretical issues that surround it. The goal of a school system is educating. Developing a quality school system requires a strongly practical emphasis on learning. What is especially significant about purpose is that it does not discount the value of educating. The seeming emphasis on shared purpose prioritizes intrinsic motivation and helps all stakeholders to become more engaged in the learning system. In systems where a sense of direction needs to overshadow the day-in-and-out of distractions and dissatisfactions, shared purpose can help connect understanding and relevance to the pursuits. Anderson (1988), wrote, “If the Why is big enough, the How will show up.” (p. 11).

One of the concepts that Anderson and Cox (1988) highlighted focuses on the theme of collaboration and inclusion of all stakeholders. They said that school systems rely too heavily on an infrastructure that is too linear, top-down and too numerously goaled. The first strategy that all participants should outline is a shared purpose and

vision that will create a climate of singular effort and accountability. Anderson and Cox suggested the entire school system: students, teachers, parents, and administrators, need to establish a moderating and centering construct that will shape their worldview.

Senge (1990) provided his particular slant on the topic of shared purpose and learning communities, stating that continual improvements in school systems evolve through establishing shared purpose, focus, and goals. Senge defined learning communities as places where “groups of individuals come together with a shared purpose and agree to construct new understandings” (p. 241). Furthermore, he suggested that when specific focus is nurtured and collectively aspired to, a higher, sustained standard of excellence is possible in most systems.

If we are to understand the complexity of any school system and the systemic forces that act upon such a system, we need to examine the interdependent and mutually influencing stakeholders. Torbert (1978) illustrated the critical implications of stakeholders in a school system from the perspective of quality performance. Inside almost every school system we can find individuals, such as students, teachers, staff, and administrators, who meet challenges with a high degree of self-directed excellence. If this direction was simultaneously developed and encouraged through the shared purpose of all members of the school system, Tolbert suggested that educational objective(s) would increasingly be met.

The system dynamics of a learning community is a process not led by individual purpose, but derived from the collaborative, collective purpose of all (DuFour, 2004). DuFour stated that when a school system develops a consensus of purpose, a powerful process of participation, responsibility, and achievement results. Additionally, when

stakeholders in the school system focus their efforts on a single, crucial goal, they begin to shift their attention from *me* to *we*. Students, teachers, staff, and administrators stop working in isolation and hoarding ideas, materials, and strategies and begins to work together to meet the needs of each other (DuFour).

In developing or transforming a school system with purpose as the foundation and performance as the outcome, one must refer to the essential research of Dietz (2001). Dietz's model of a school's performance system identifies the system-wide flow of information that forms and informs the relationships of stakeholders. The balance between order and chaos is managed by shared purpose and a clear goal. Purpose sets the stage for each essential attribute of a healthy school system.

In the purpose phase, school stakeholders define purpose in relation to their personal goals. Next, stakeholders define the school's purpose. It is the relationship between personal and system-wide values that establishes shared purpose (Dietz, 2001). In the focus phase, administrators, teachers, and students establish goals that are determined by their shared purpose. The outcome phase is determined by the school system's efforts to achieve the goal.

Within the last few years, more research was conducted and general agreement now exists for the increasingly broader acceptance of purpose and performance. School systems are generally more effective when personal development is generated, owned, and supported by the whole community of teachers, students, and parents. Identifying a distinctive mission involves critical dialogue with all members of the school system as they uncover, discover, and recover the notion of excellence. Moreover, agreement on matters of purpose is a useful foundation for delivering standards of achievement. With

one flag to salute, people in educational systems can better position the organization to strategize on those tactics most likely to achieve the common pragmatic goal (Wagner & Benavente-McEnergy, 2006).

Whichever starting point a school system uses, the systematic development and influence of shared purpose and identity are essential to the system's mission (Lickona & Davidson, 2005). Using data and information from the Lickona and Davidson study (2005), researchers discovered most high school systems have a published mission statement, but a much smaller percentage of schools have a clear and understood relevance to purpose. The fundamental affairs of the system are not in and of themselves things stakeholders learn; rather they are the things stakeholders know. Pattengale (2009) argued that a sense of purpose is the relevance stakeholders, in a school system, characterized as the most dominant character quality to help overcome challenges.

As Covey (2004) stated, a clear understanding, effectively nurtured, visibly inspires personal commitment and continuous development on the part of all members in a system. The mission of the school is conceived at the point of our own consciousness and determination of what educators regard as purpose. In this sense, thoughts, beliefs and values make up the mental representations of purpose.

Every member of the school system must find a way to fulfill and realize they are a part of the central mission, which should reflect the basic purpose and character of the school (Lickona & Davidson, 2005). Every school system should prescribe standards of performance, some permanent, some changing that commit students, teachers, parents, staff, and administrators to the pursuit of excellence. Though purpose often reflects a

holistic sense of identity, an individual stakeholder's values and convictions are still a central element of what matters most.

Each person's identity is crucial to the school community. As the stakeholder's identity is shaped by an amalgam of forces, including ideological beliefs and idiosyncratic individual experiences, membership in the school community emerges as a psychological stimulus. In the best of circumstances, community membership can integrate a sense of identity into one coherent, positive attitude that celebrates the system's purpose and progress (Damon, 2002). The major point, that the social influence of the system, enlisted and supported by the identity of the shared purpose, seems relatively simple and proper. Purpose is the pathway to identity, this is true for any system as it is for a person (Damon).

The relevance of shared purpose and explored the worth of and importance of this notion as it impacts a school system has been presented. What overshadows and challenges this approach is found in the complex and contradictory aspects of purpose and its proven importance in the system's outcomes, best expressed in performance benchmarks. The culminating value of shared purpose potentially needs to be concerned with the formal users of the system (Jenlink, 2004). In the case of a school system, students, teachers, and administrators need to be examined.

The value of something, in any system, encompasses a range and degree of influence. This investigation and analysis sought to understand how, why, and to what outcome does shared purpose potentially contribute to the school system. In systems thinking the component parts of a system can best be understood in the context of relationships with each other and with other systems. The only way to fully appreciate

the value of a person, idea, object, or anything else is to understand the part in relation to the whole (Benathy, 1992). By examining the connection and function of shared purpose in a school system, one should be oriented to the specific pragmatic goals of the school system.

Beginning with the end in mind (Covey, 2004), educators should take into account quantifiable variables that are constant (Dewey, 1941). Next, one should consider the general task of the school system, best understood and distinguished in the context of intrinsic value to the system. Dewey stated that the value we place on an outcome is purposive and the continuous valuing activity can be enduring. Anticipated academic performance, conceptualized by ACT test scores and Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), often expresses the basic outcomes of a school system.

Conceptually, the tangible and intangible elements of the school system are found in the relationships and experiences of its stakeholders. The outcome, academic performance, is less random and meaningless against the backdrop of objective and appreciated evaluation (Dewey, 1941). Yet, there is little empirical support for a predictive model of academic achievement based on social support of a school system (Ray & Elliott, 2006). School systems that are primarily seeking to improve performance outcomes rarely recognize shared purpose as the defining link for ensuring the acquisition of academic skills. With no broad evidence of a relationship between purpose and academic performance, the current study sought to objectively compare the relationship from the dimensions of mutually influenced interactions.

Benathy (1991) suggested educators need to perceive the landscape of learning through the lens of reality and not the design of a bygone era. A new mindset, a new way

of thinking, is increasingly important in the complex, crisis mode of modern day school systems. Ensuring the acquisition of necessary intellectual tools is the defining purpose of a school system (Hirsch, 1999). The degree and quality rests in purpose.

If we address and recognize the associated limitations of shared purpose within a relevant system, we can still realize the degree of value within the larger whole. The challenge for stakeholders in a school system is to create and develop a system framework that considers the effectiveness of purpose, while emphasizing the critical outcomes of the system (Andreadis, 2009). Characteristics of quality academic programs, particularly programs with high performance indicators, attribute shared purpose, as an essential ingredient in the establishment of excellence (Banta & Borden, 1994).

Embedded in the school system is an interconnected framework of parts. In the traditional perspective of unidirectional cause and effect, interactive relationships were linear and detached. We now know such systems are synthesized, multiple interactive and nondeterministic. Though still goal-driven by learner outcomes, purpose is the emerging view of disciplined inquiry, where determinism was defined as a part of the system's framework, purpose is the interaction of the system. Benathy (1992) further stated that purpose establishes a grand alliance that leads us to aspire to understand in a mutually affective worldview.

One of the most significant reasons that school systems do not immediately respond to the call of purpose as a component of the system itself is due to factors of educational outcomes. Leming (2006) stated it is reasonably promising to practitioners to see the value of purpose and, in theory, a system's design that integrates academic

excellence and character traits such as purpose. Purpose and its dimensions extend to the total learning system a relevant guide for stakeholders, yet it is not clear how purpose can be more than a support in the system's design.

In a comprehensive system of educational practice, educators focus on the tasks with the widest use and greatest impact (Dewey, 1929). In the designing and developing of effective educational programs, Dewey described the process as engineering an overreaching framework of ideas and values necessary for effective learning. At the center of this cluster of ideas and values, broad applicability is essential.

According to Damon (2002), a crucial component of education is engagement. Damon viewed mechanisms that promote, but not directly connected to students' academic performance, are inspiring and meaningful. The academic excellence of a school system may not depend primarily on explicit classroom instruction. Pivotal in the academic instructional processes are recognized levels of stakeholder ownership. Academic performance, to the extent that learning is indeed the consequence of instruction, is of its own systematic design (Visser & Visser, 2000). Visser and Visser suggested that the more educators are convinced of the connection between instruction and learning, the more they lost sight of the multifaceted nature of the school system. So fundamental is the perspective of what schooling is, educators often do not comprehend the comprehensive vision of schooling. The notion that a school system prepares its stakeholders for life has become obsolete, except in one sense: the significance of learning and its relevance to all our lives (Visser & Visser).

According to Jenlick (2004), educational systems reflect the critical consciousness of the individual and the social self. Within social contexts of an educational system, the

users of that system have the privilege and responsibility of shaping that system. In the case of educational systems, stakeholders who must directly experience the consequences of the school system should have a primary role in determining the core values. Different groups of people within the school system may hold or prioritize different values. Such values inform or guide the school's activities toward goals or outcomes. Values explicit in the statement of purpose are the ideal societal fabric that must be woven throughout the system (Benathy, 1992). Valuing statements bring to the foreground all conceptions and actions, that provide multiple opportunities for the diverse stakeholders (Jenlick).

Shared purpose creates a community of inclusion and equality. A shared consciousness is both emancipating and self-determining (Shapcott, 2002). Unlike the constraints of imperatives, which are bonds and realized limits of exclusive categories, the contributory good of a purposive activity is intrinsically valued when it is a part of the whole (Dewey, 1939). To strive either for academic excellence, or to give up in hopelessness, is not a celebration of achievement, but an artificial scarcity of success. If cooperation and collaboration was the driving force of confidence, optimism and persistence for all; this unity of character may motivate greater effort and thus more learning (Stiggins, 2005).

Benathy (1992) stated that the viability and relevance of an educational system will be judged on the extent to which the system transforms learning and development for future generations of learners. In developing a school system one must think of the functional context and the purposive design that is appropriate and understood between stakeholders. The existing design should be created as a model or stage for future stakeholders (Benathy, 1996). Good schools build a unified school culture around

excellence by developing and expressing their shared purpose and identify over generations (Lickona & Davidson, 2005).

Research has presented that academic excellence is positively related to academic goals over time (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2003). By valuing purpose and fostering the self, the school system can create, keep, and propagate essential characteristics that provide some contributory good to the wider system. As the individual stakeholders become increasingly influenced by the attitudes, traits, and trends of the whole school system, a nexus of patterning converges (Allport, 1955). DiPerna and Elliott (2002) included a student's aptitude in content areas as predictive of academic performance, but categorized academic enablers, such as attitudes and interpersonal behaviors, as significantly contributing to the area of achievement.

This investigation considered a unique attempt to understand the educational system from a generally axiological relationship. In the system model, relationships are ontologically different from represented elements. Often, a relationship in a system has an emergent property as a whole. Thus, the significant characteristic of a system is not found in the elements, but in the whole (Laszlo, 1972). Therefore, the value is formulated within the concentrated expression of the outcomes. If shared purpose is an elemental component of the school system, its value can be best stated in the measures of academic excellence. How fundamental the influence of shared purpose on academic performance or academic excellence is the empirical work of the investigation. How valued is shared purpose as an elemental component of the school system appears in the aims and ideals for action.

When investigating and assessing the justifiability of shared purpose, with regard to a school system, one must appeal to things that the school systems have reason to want. There are many accomplishments that schools want and there are many circumstances that contribute to the well-being of students, teachers, parents, and administrators. A researcher cannot delimit the range of considerations that figure in justification of academic excellence by defining the boundaries of excellence too narrowly. However, educators would argue that it is intuitively understood that academics is a main rational aim of most school systems.

Additionally, the shared purpose of any given school is quite indeterminate until we know what the aim of the school system might indeed be. For the researcher, this means that an abstract notion of shared purpose is not yet defined until a rational aim is in place to provide an opportunity of content. Despite the ongoing efforts of educators and communities to improve their schools, priorities and goals set by educators have, at times, not achieved excellence. Since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 and more recently, the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, school systems are seriously looking to state assessments as true measures of academic excellence (Daggett, 2005). Additionally, compliance with the AYP provision of *No Child Left Behind* sets minimum proficiency levels of academic performance. As excellence becomes a goal of opportunity and advancement for all stakeholders in the school system, a critical juncture of purpose emerges.

From a stakeholder's point of view, the conditions that contribute to one's own purpose are obviously important, dramatically lessening the significance of a shared purpose. However, extensive research conducted around the country shows that by

consistently applying guiding actions that require a sense of obligation, learners can produce impressive gains in student achievement (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Additionally, the importance of shared purpose may especially find significance for struggling learners by presenting expectations they may not have internalized due to lack of academic success (Stiggins, 2007).

As distinctive perspectives and concerns provide the features of importance, a rigorous and relevant education becomes the link between purpose and excellence (Daggett, 2005). Purpose is best understood within the framework of the successful pursuit of worthwhile goals. What makes an activity worthwhile is its contribution to the well-being of others (Scanlon, 1998). Mill (1987) stated that nothing is desired for its own sake unless it is desired as part of a whole. If the school system values something that can contribute to the excellence of each stakeholder, a consuming interest of activity may be considered. Moreover, attitudes of difference could conceivably be reduced by the importance of cooperative aims.

In the preceding pages, evidence was presented to give a clearer picture of shared purpose from the perspective and lens of the school system and its stakeholders. This attempt lay behind a version of pragmatism and Deweyan themes that the one distinction of shared purpose may be the aim of improving our schools in such a way that trust and cooperation are the most plausible starting points of excellence. To work together, to improve our futures, and to create favorable circumstances for administrators, students, teachers, staff, and parents entails that every action and belief is as good as another (Rorty, 1999). Dewey (1982) spoke on purpose and the inherited incompatibilities that result when we are not enabled to realize the hope that comes from social cooperation.

The idea of improving schools by developing shared purpose may be more deeply embedded in school systems than previously understood.

Hypothesis

When practitioners think about a school system's efforts to foster academic excellence, a synthesis of standards and expectations present itself in purpose and function. The mission of a school system is not to simply ensure that students are taught, but to ensure they learn (DuFour, 2004). This understanding has profound implications for a school system, because learning can be measured in models or schemata of performance (Perkins, 1996). As stated in Chapter One, this study set forth to explain a conjectural relation between shared purpose and academic excellence. The formation of sufficient evidence for proof was introduced in a null hypothesis, stated as:

- (1) There is no significant relationship between shared purpose and ACT assessment scores.
- (2) There is no significant relationship between shared purpose and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status.

Educational learning begins when stakeholders share achievement targets with students (Stiggins, 2007). By presenting school-wide expectations to students and staff, a complex notion of achievement and assessment can be balanced and understood through a descriptive view of purpose. School mission statements literally and straightforwardly characterize the focus of learning into a common initiative (DuFour, 2009). Moreover, investigation into the differences of effective and ineffective high schools suggest that clear academic goals and focus facilitate learning resulting in consistently higher dimensions of effectiveness (Teddlie, Kirby, & Stringfield, 1989).

Central to each hypothesis is the assumption that academic excellence, as measured by standardized testing, is a significant reflection of academic purpose. While having all students in a school system achieve academic excellence is a worthy goal, it is only a starting point. The finish line, and perhaps a more true indication of a student's ability to apply knowledge, has become state assessments (Daggert, 2005). Further, the new accountability and key components of the *No Child Left Behind Act (NLCB)* (2001) clearly mandates both assessments and adequate yearly progress (AYP) for schools as indicators of academic performance (Dworkin, 2005). The expressed purpose of establishing central components of accountability is to raise student achievement, and more generally, improve the quality of schooling (Carney, Elmore, & Siskin, 2003).

Most high schools are established institutions with fairly standard curriculum, standardized textbooks, graded classes, and established ways of doing things. Often, however, high schools vary in their approaches to assessment, accountability, and performance. Additionally, common shared educational purpose often reflects only the policies and goals of each particular school. This literature review examined the intersection of purpose and performance, in particular, as a determinant of academic excellence. Though seemingly incompatible, high-stakes accountability may tend to align schools around clearly defined goals and purpose (Carney, Elmore, & Siskin, 2003).

Critics of accountability systems that involve high-stakes testing have contended that emphasis on single factor indicators of academic progress discriminates against students who have trouble with multiple-choice tests and harm mostly poor, minority group members, perhaps even increasing their dropout rate (Heubert & Hauser, 1999). Nevertheless, other studies have suggested that accountability systems that use high-

stakes testing such as the ACT, could be responsible in narrowing gaps of academic achievement and forcing school systems to address the education of the entire student population (Toenjes & Dworkin, 2002). Educators continue to criticize testing as invalid to its intended purpose, contending high-stakes testing actually misplaces focus on test taking, ignoring the quality of teaching as the key factor to academic excellence (Hillard, 2000).

The National Center for Fair and Open Testing (1998) published a study downgrading the importance of ACT scores and Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores as reliant measures for screening applicants for college; yet, in the same study, acknowledged that high-stakes test scores are the standards most universities and colleges use in selecting their most academically qualified candidates (Rooney & Schaeffer, 1998). In two studies of academic achievers in high schools, investigators recognized scores of high-stakes testing as characteristics of academically talented students, ranking these scores equally important as career interests and group membership relevant to academic achievers (Kerr, 1992).

Despite concerns surrounding high-stakes testing and test scores, there are supporters who insist that both are legitimate measures of achievement. ACT and SAT tests can be invaluable, trustworthy tools in helping to design quality education programs (Carpenter, 2001). Eva L. Baker, Co-Director of the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing, testified that high-stakes test scores scientifically validate and measure academic domains and that designing and implementing large scale testing could systematically improve and prepare students to succeed academically (as cited in Carpenter, 2001). Furthermore, studies indicated the

effects of high-stakes testing and annual yearly progress reporting has had a huge impact on all stakeholders and their practices (Merrow, 2001).

In the summer of 1989, the top corporate and business CEOs in this country, along with public school administrators, agreed to embark on an educational reform agenda. This agenda included a promotion of high-stakes testing as a benchmark of academic standards (Emery, 2007). As stakeholders from business and the community served as a new unified voice in endorsing academic progress in America's high schools, state legislatures adopted state standards and imposed yearly progress reports. Concerned public school educators, along with school stakeholders, recognized the need to establish key issues of academic achievement and to develop a sense of purpose (Anyon, 2005). Emery (2007) documented high expectations, promoted through purpose and goals, and not increased funding or smaller class size, was the key to academic achievement.

Cited as proof of the positive effects of stakeholder accountability, outcomes of standardized testing resulted in more standardized curriculum and school-wide common goal(s), designed primarily to at least adjust and organize the school into one coherent gauge of assessment (Brown, Galassi & Akos, 2004). Additionally, school counselors and teachers responded that clarification and unification of teaching instruction has a positive impact on a student's progress, gains in test scores, and accountability policies. School counselors and staff also noted that a student's confidence toward learning improve when they feel less isolated and alienated from the school system (Thorn & Muluenon, 2002). True excellence and accountability does not exacerbate the inequalities that exist in school systems. Rather it is the collaboration within the system that supports the stakeholders' efforts. Learning begins when educators share

achievement targets with students, then frequently assess performance for evidence of achievement (Stiggins, 2007).

Although research has linked educational excellence to meeting standards, there is tremendous variability and intellectual debate on the framework of such standards. In determining equity and quality academics, authentic standards-based reform, and not high-stakes testing, is currently challenging the status quo (Thompson, 2001). The justification and rationalization that standardized tests truly indicate or reflect academic excellence is adequate to accomplish a purpose, but not decisive, stated Kohn (2000). To manifest excellence, teachers, principals, and community stakeholders need to know that strong partnerships in the school community are crucial to improving student learning (Brabeck & Shirley, 2003).

Conclusion

As implied by the title of the study, the research reported on various studies that point to academic excellence and shared purpose. The study reviewed and synthesized the data and scholarly literature on the quality of learning and teaching in Illinois' high schools, with special concern for the experience of shared purpose and academic achievement. At the heart of the project is the belief that learning and teaching are complex, valued, and shared endeavors that require an examination of not only the process of learning, but the reasons of learning.

To study a representative sampling of excellence and achievement, with particular reference to the impact of purpose, high school programs were assessed in ways shared purpose fostered excellence both conceptually and practically. Two hypotheses were set forth to guide the investigation:

There is no significant relationship between shared purpose and ACT assessment scores.

(2) There is no significant relationship between shared purpose and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status.

Much can be said for the impressive body of literature supporting and featuring vision and purpose as the illuminating light of school systems. Likewise, to an extent that was not anticipated, various studies identified standardized tests and school progress reporting as factors in promoting achievement. The general research findings suggested a potential effect of well-designed educational systems, which focus attention on motivating both students and educators, and foster and develop achievement within the recognized limits and promise of high-stakes testing and accountability (Goertz & Duffy, 2003). This practical recommendation for action to be taken by educators, school boards, and parents has already been adopted by 49 states with the expressed shared purpose to raise student achievement through some form of standards-based reform (Goertz, & Duffy, 2001).

As organizational theorists suggested, deep and sustained system change must begin with humanistic matters of purpose, followed by operational and productive measures (Dixon, 1994). Much of the literature for successfully navigating a strategic response to testing and reporting emerged from existing themes of action supporting a shared response. “By developing, articulating, and implementing a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the community, we derive meaning” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996, p. 10). To create a sense of personal relevance for each member of the school community, mixed interests aside, language explicitly evident of support of

one another evolved from mission statements, administrator portfolios, and action projects.

Murphy, Beck, Crawford, Hodges, and McGaughy (2001) found the key to ensure that schools made continuous and substantial academic progress was the creation of a school mission that reflected high and appropriate standards of learning with a clearly defined purpose. Besides ambitious goals, a well-defined accountability system was needed to create incentives for school districts, teachers, and students for achieving objectives as specified (Goertz & Duffy, 2001). In particular, school systems needed to make certain that assessment data was related to student learning and the information pertaining to student achievement would be beneficial to the development of on-going mission statements (Murphy, Beck, Crawford, Hodges & McGaughy, 2001).

Successful high schools have at their core a vision or mission that allows the school to achieve academic excellence for its students (Murphy & Hallinger, 1988). Critical to academic outcomes is the school system's efforts to establish a common set of academic goals that are partially focused on standards (Glaser & Siler, 1994). By identifying absolute targets of performance, coupled with aligned assessments, the school community develops a covenant of purpose to guide decisions and operations (Ogden & Germinario, 1995). It is at the presence of shared purpose where goals are articulated, that a common academic course is put in place "High schools to be effective must have a sense of purpose, with teachers, students, administrators, and parents sharing a vision of what they are trying to accomplish" (Boyer, 1983, p. 66).

The logical imperative to secure a framework wherein excellence is clearly the result of purpose provided the essential perspective regarding the research. Forming the

axiological basis relative to shared purpose and academic excellence is the cohesive action that ultimately benefits each and every stakeholder. “The true function of the conditions that call forth efforts is, then, first to make an individual more conscious of the end and purpose of his actions” (Dewey, 1975, p. 53).

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter III provides a detailed description of the research methodology used for this study. In this chapter, the research design and its appropriateness are explained. Information on the research design, study population, data collection procedures and rationale, analytical methods, and limitations are discussed in this chapter.

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to explain a conjectural relation between shared purpose and academic excellence, which is defined by two different measures, American College Testing (ACT) scores and also by Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status Spearman's. This study investigated the relationship between *shared purpose*, *ACT scores*, and *AYP status*. The study included data collected from a simple random sampling of public high schools in the state of Illinois.

The overarching research question for this study was “Is there a relationship between shared purpose and academic performance of high schools in the state of Illinois?”

Two statistical hypotheses addressed the research question:

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between shared purpose and ACT Assessment scores.

Alternative Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between shared purpose and ACT Assessment scores.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between shared purpose and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status.

Alternative Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between shared purpose and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status.

Research Design

A quantitative correlational research design was used for the study. The objective of quantitative correlational designs is to examine potential relationships among variables (Bernard, 2006; Cooper & Schindler, 2005; Creswell, 2005; Johnson & Christensen, 2007; Neuman, 2006). The quantitative method was selected to utilize an explanatory correlational design. Explanatory research design consists of determining the extent of association between two (or more) variables (Creswell). This type of design was chosen for this study in order to investigate possible associations between the independent variables of *shared purpose* with dependent variables of *ACT scores* and *AYP status*.

A quantitative correlational research design was considered appropriate for the proposed study because investigation of relationships between variables, including their strength and direction of association, was the motive of this study. According to Creswell (2005), correlational designs are “procedures in quantitative research in which investigators measure the degree of association or relationship between two or more variables using statistical procedures” (p. 52). The quantitative method was selected to utilize an explanatory correlational design.

In correlational research, the two primary correlation designs are explanatory and prediction (Creswell, 2005). Explanatory correlational research design is defined as “the extent to which two variables (or more) co-vary, that is, where changes in one variable are reflected in changes in the other” (p. 327). Additionally, Creswell stated “the objective of prediction design is to anticipate outcomes by using certain variables as

predictors” (p. 328). However, the intent of this study was not to make predictions about outcomes. In the case of this study, the purpose was to show the extent of the relationship between the variables *shared purpose*, according to standards of assessment, and *ACT scores* and *AYP status*; therefore, an explanatory design was appropriate.

Quantitative research addresses questions about relationships between measured variables for the purpose of explaining, predicting, and controlling events (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The quantitative approach is appropriate because it reduces potential biases by focusing on direct responses without interpretation. Quantitative research involves the use of specific and narrow questions targeted toward measuring and explaining variable relationships (Cooper & Schindler, 2005; Creswell, 2005).

Qualitative research design was not selected for this study. Qualitative research design is not appropriate for this study because this process analyzes words or text from participants and inquiries are conducted in a more subjective and biased manner (Creswell, 2005).

A variety of methods are available to examine relationships between *shared purpose* and academic performance. A retrospective observational study method was chosen for this study. Other, non-selected methods include experiments, survey sampling, focus groups, case studies, or interviews (Creswell, 2005).

The dataset used for this study was collected by the Illinois School State Board of Education, Division of Data Analysis and Progress Reporting. This division analyzes data for policy and planning and coordinates annual reporting on progress related to Illinois State Board of Education goals and Illinois legislative requirements, including district and school demographics, *ACT scores* and averages, and adequate yearly progress status.

The dataset includes information collected for the years 2008-2009, correlated to *shared purpose* and academic performance.

The Illinois School Report Card provides more detailed information than could be collected by survey sampling or with focus groups due to temporal and cost considerations. Also, use of the Illinois School Report Card data allows for more objective data collection than could be done if collecting more subjective participant answers on surveys or with focus groups. An experimental design was not appropriate to this study due to ethical limitations on the ability to manipulate study groups to achieve desired answers to the questions of this study.

Population

Public high schools in the state of Illinois were the population for study. To be considered for inclusion in the study, the following criteria were required: 1) the public high school was listed in the published educational directory for the state of Illinois; 2) the school sought and received regional accreditation approval from the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement; 3) the school published and provided guidelines that characterized why they existed and how they engaged in creating a future of excellence; 4) the school released, as required by state and federal laws, a report card with published academic performance averages from ACT assessment testing; and 5) the Adequate Yearly Progress status report from the Illinois School Report Card documenting academic growth of meeting/exceeding standards was released.

Correlational analysis was performed on the data, specifically Spearman's rank order correlation (Hypothesis 1) and rank biserial correlation (Hypothesis 2). An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also performed to address Hypothesis 1.

An a priori power analysis was performed to determine the required sample size for this study. GPOWER 3.0.10 software (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) was used in this determination. The analysis was performed for a two-tailed test of correlation, with an alpha level of 0.05, power of 0.80, and a medium effect size of $|r| = 0.30$. The results indicated that a sample of 82 participants was required to achieve power at 80%.

A power analysis was also performed for ANOVA, with four independent groups, an alpha level of 0.05, power of 0.80, and a medium effect size of $f = 0.25$. The results indicated that a sample of 180 participants was required to achieve power at 80%. For a large effect size of $f = 0.40$ a sample of 76 participants was required.

Power is $(1-\beta)$, where β is the chance of Type II error (i.e., one accepts the null hypothesis when it is, in fact, false). At a power of 0.80, one has an 80% chance of seeing significance that is truly indicated by the data.

Attempts were made to collect records from at least 100 schools. The sample of 100 schools allowed for some flexibility in dealing with possible incomplete and missing data during analysis.

Data Collection

First, the variables to be correlated were identified: the variable *shared purpose* and the variable *ACT score*. The variable *shared purpose* and the variable *AYP status* were identified next for correlation. After the variables were identified, the appropriate

population and participants were selected. In conducting this study, two groups of population were identified for this relation: public high schools in the state of Illinois and North Central regionally accredited high schools in the state of Illinois.

The variable of *shared purpose* was ordinal with four levels of measurement, (1) not evident, (2) emerging, (3) operational, and (4) highly functional (SOURCE?). The variable *ACT score* was continuous and ranges from 1-36. The variable *AYP status* was dichotomous (yes vs. no)

Analytical Methods

The instruments chosen for this study were selected in order to gain insight into the relationship of *shared purpose* and academic achievement. Measures were selected to represent both North Central Accreditation and *ACT scores* and North Central Accreditation *AYP status*.

This quantitative correlation study answered two research questions. The researcher employed SPSS v15.0 for data analysis. This tool enabled the researcher to compare and collect data in order to determine whether and to what degree a relationship existed. Descriptive measures were also collected and reported regarding public high school demographics as a way to integrate the analysis for study.

The main purpose of the data analysis was to show distributions among variables, correlations among variables and mean differences between ACT scores for the groups of *shared purpose*. These tools provided a comprehensive analysis of the data interpretation and influences.

A 95% level of significance was used for all inferential analyses. The statistical analyses used and operationalized variables are presented as they relate to each of the two statistical hypotheses as follows:

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between shared purpose and ACT Assessment scores.

Alternative Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between shared purpose and ACT Assessment scores.

Spearman's rank order correlation was performed on bi-variate relationships of the variables *shared purpose* and *ACT scores*. The variable *shared purpose* was ordinal with four categories, (1) not evident, (2) emerging, (3) operational, and (4) highly functional. The coding for *shared purpose* was done according to order of the variables, with not evident = 1 and highly functional = 4. The variable *ACT score* was continuous with a range of possible scores 1-36.

A between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also performed to address Hypothesis 1. The independent variable was *shared purpose* with four groups, (1) not evident, (2) emerging, (3) operational, and (4) highly functional. The dependent variable was *ACT score*. Mean *ACT scores* were compared for statistically significant differences between the four *shared purpose* groups.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between shared purpose and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status.

Alternative Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between shared purpose and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status.

Rank biserial correlation was performed on bi-variate relationships of the variables *shared purpose* and *AYP status*. The variable *shared purpose* was ordinal with four categories, (1) not evident, (2) emerging, (3) operational, and (4) highly functional. The coding for *shared purpose* was done according to order of the variables with not evident = 1 and highly functional = 4. The variable of *AYP status* was dichotomous and was coded for analysis as yes = 1, no = 0.

Limitations

The possible limitations of this study included the definitions used for inclusion and other key terms discussed within the study depending on the model of inclusion each school in the state of Illinois elects to use. Each school may define inclusion differently; therefore, making it difficult to generalize. In addition, this study was conducted in the state of Illinois; the sample is only from one state and limited to public high schools. Another possible limitation is the issue of the sample size and the difficulty in collecting a large enough sample for the study.

Finally, in this study there were multiple independent and dependent variables, which may affect the results of the study. Variables played an important role in this study and included latent considerations such as the size and socio-economic status of the school populations, and the principals' and teachers' demographics and experiences as educators, all which are factors that may have presented limitations to this study. Although there are potential limitations and delimitations, this study may produce significant findings to the research knowledge base in the area of shared purpose and academic performance.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to explain a conjectural relation between shared purpose and academic excellence. The empirical work remains a preliminary investigation of the very complex, continuous process of fundamental policy choices and student achievement. Though the character of this research attends to fortuitous occurrence, adequate data and precise definitions have been implemented to assure systematic, measured attributes.

This study investigated the relationship between shared purpose, ACT scores, and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status. The study included data collected from a convenience sample of public high schools in the state of Illinois. The research methodology was detailed in chapter three; this chapter presents the findings obtained from the study.

The overarching research question for this study is, “What is the relationship between shared purpose and academic performance of high schools in the state of Illinois?”

Two statistical hypotheses address the research question:

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between shared purpose and ACT Assessment scores.

Alternative Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between shared purpose and ACT Assessment scores.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between shared purpose and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status.

Alternative Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between shared purpose and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status.

Chapter 4 is divided into three sections: (a) population and demographic findings; (b) investigation of assumptions as relates to inferential analysis; and (c) inferential analysis as it relates to the two hypotheses of this study. The chapter concludes with a summary of results, Statistical Analysis Software v 15.0 was used for all descriptive and inferential analyses. A 95% level of significance was set for rejection of the null hypothesis for all analyses.

Findings

Population and Demographics

Public high schools and regionally-accredited high schools in the State of Illinois were the population for study. Each of the high schools included in the study were listed in the published educational directory for the state of Illinois. All high schools sought and received regional accreditation approval from the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement. Each school reported and engaged its entire community in an in-depth assessment of shared purpose; supported and identified from data, information, evidence, and documentation according to AdvanceEd's rubric and analysis. Each school's ACT assessment testing and Adequate Yearly Progress status was documented and produced by Section 10-17a of the Illinois School Code, in compliance with the federal No Child Left Behind law of 2001. The Illinois report card-related data was found at <http://www.isbe.net/research>. Specific

demographics for the schools were not obtained in order to preserve confidentiality of the schools.

Data Collected for Study

Records collected included the ordinal variable of (a) Vision and purpose score; coded as 1 = not evident, 2 = emerging, 3 = operational, and 4 = highly functional; (b) ACT score, an average score for the school. ACT score is a continuous variable with a possible range of 1 to 36, with higher scores indicating higher academic performance; and (c) AYP status, a dichotomous variable coded as 1 = not meeting or exceeding academic standards, and 1 = meeting or exceeding academic standards. Table 1 presents the frequencies and percentages for the sample on each of the collected variables.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics Variables Collected for Study Sample as Relates to Schools' Shared Purpose (N = 101)

Shared Purpose Classification	Freq.	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	ACT Range of Shared Purpose Classification
1. Not Evident	5	5.0	---	---	---	---
AYP Status						
Yes	0	0.0	---	---	---	---
No	5	100.0	---	---	---	---
ACT Score	---	---	15.18	0.77	15.10	14.3 – 16.1
2. Emerging	32	31.7	---	---	---	---
AYP Status						
Yes	2	6.3	---	---	---	---
No	30	93.8	---	---	---	---
ACT Score			17.50	1.87	17.35	14.3-21.9
3. Operational	38	37.6	---	---	---	---
AYP Status						
Yes	10	26.3				
No	28	73.7				
ACT Score			19.52	1.65	19.4	16.4 – 22.9
4. Highly Functional	26	25.7	---	---	---	---
AYP Status						
Yes	21	80.8				
No	5	19.2				
ACT Score			22.30	1.96	22.3	18.8 – 27.4

Note: Freq. = Frequency; % = Percent; *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; *Mdn* = Median; ACT = American College Testing; AYP = Adequate Yearly Progress.

Percentages of each of the four shared purpose categories are reported as relates to entire sample ($N = 101$). Percentages for AYP status are reported as they relate to shared purpose classification group.

The mean ACT score for the sample was 19.38 ($SD = 2.70$), and ACT scores ranged from 14.3 to 27.4. Thirty-three schools (32.7%) reported meeting AYP standards for the year. Seventy schools (69.3%) reported a shared purpose of either emerging or operational.

Assumptions for Inferential Analysis

Analyses for this study included Spearman's rank order correlation, a one-way, between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA), and rank biserial correlation. A correlation using Cramer's V was also used as a follow-up analysis for the rank biserial correlation used in Hypothesis 2, due to a non-monotonic relationship of the variables of AYP and shared purpose. The term non-monotonic is warranted, because of the conclusions represented. When a monotonic relationship exists, adding new information either always increases or decreases the inference in an ordered logic; under a non-monotonic relationship, adding new information does not increase and may decrease the relationship. Non-monotonic reasoning is where one draws a conclusion about the relationship, but it is not a guarantee to be true.

The dataset was investigated for the inferential analysis assumptions of missing data, absence of outliers, normality, homogeneity of variances, and a monotonic relationship of correlation analysis variables. There were no records of missing data, but

one outlying score was found for the ACT score variable, an ACT score of 27.4. This outlying score was not extreme, as it was within +/- 3.3 standard deviations from the mean, and was within acceptable ranges of ACT scores. Additionally, the mean ACT score ($M = 19.38$) and median ACT score ($Mdn = 19.3$) for the dataset were quite close in value, indicating that the outlying score was not adversely impacting the distribution of the dataset as a whole. The outlier score was retained for analysis and was distinguished from the other data. Outlier tests define extreme values and allow for extreme values in the dataset.

Normality for the ACT variable was investigated via Kolmogorov-Tests and a visual inspection of histograms and normal Q-Q plots. The standard normal distribution was calculated and proportional variance was measured within +/- 3.3 deviations from the mean. Homogeneity of variances was investigated via Levene's Test, resulting in equal population variances.

A monotonic relationship was evident for the Spearman's rank order correlation of Hypothesis 1. However, one was not present for the rank-biserial correlation between AYP status and shared purpose classification of Hypothesis 2. A Cramer's V correlation was used in lieu of the rank-biserial correlation.

Hypothesis Testing

The overarching research question for this study was, "What is the relationship between shared purpose and academic performance of high schools in the state of Illinois?"

Two statistical hypotheses addressed the research question. The inferential analysis results are presented according to statistical hypothesis.

Inferential Analysis relating to Hypothesis 1:

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between shared purpose and ACT Assessment scores.

Alternative Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between shared purpose and ACT Assessment scores.

A Spearman's rank order correlation was performed on bi-variate relationships of the variables of shared purpose and ACT scores. The variable of shared purpose was ordinal with four categories, (1) not evident, (2) emerging, (3) operational, and (4) highly functional. The coding for the shared purpose variable was done according to order of the variables, with not evident = 1 through highly functional = 4. The variable of ACT score was continuous, with a range of possible scores from 1 to 36.

Results were statistically significant ($\rho = .761, p < .0005$). The association between the two variables was strong and positive, meaning that when scores on shared purpose increased or decreased, ACT scores moved in a like manner.

A between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also performed to address Hypothesis 1. The independent variable was shared purpose with four groups, (1) not evident, (2) emerging, (3) operational, and (4) highly functional. The dependent variable was ACT score. The mean ACT scores for each of the shared purpose groups were compared (see Table 1 for means and standard deviations of the four shared purpose groups). Results were statistically significant, $df(3, 97) = 44.73, p < .0005$. Post-hoc analysis using Tukey's highly significant difference (Tukey) test indicated that the average ACT scores were significantly different between all four group pairs. ACT scores increased as the shared purpose classification increased. Table Two presents the

results of post-hoc analyses using Tukey's HSD test. Figure 1 presents a graph of the mean scores for each of the four shared purpose groups.

Table 2

Results of Post-Hoc Results of Significant ANOVA Findings for Shared Purpose

Classifications via Tukey's HSD Test (N = 101)

		Mean			
Shared Purpose	Shared Purpose	Difference			Effect
Classification (A)	Classification (B)	(A-B)	SEM	p-value	size (d)
Not evident	Emerging	-2.32	.855	0.39	1.63
	Operational	-4.34	.846	<.0005	3.38
	Highly functional	-7.12	.868	<.0005	4.79
Emerging	Not evident	2.32	.855	<.0005	1.63
	Operational	-2.02	.427	<.0005	1.15
	Highly functional	-4.80	.469	<.0005	2.51
Operational	Not evident	4.34	.846	<.0005	3.38
	Emerging	2.02	.427	<.0005	1.15
	Highly functional	-2.78	.453	<.0005	1.54
Highly functional	Not evident	7.12	.868	<.0005	4.79
	Emerging	1.80	.469	<.0005	2.51
	Operational	2.78	.453	<.0005	1.54

Note. SEM = Standard Error of the Mean Difference; *d* = Cohen's *d*.

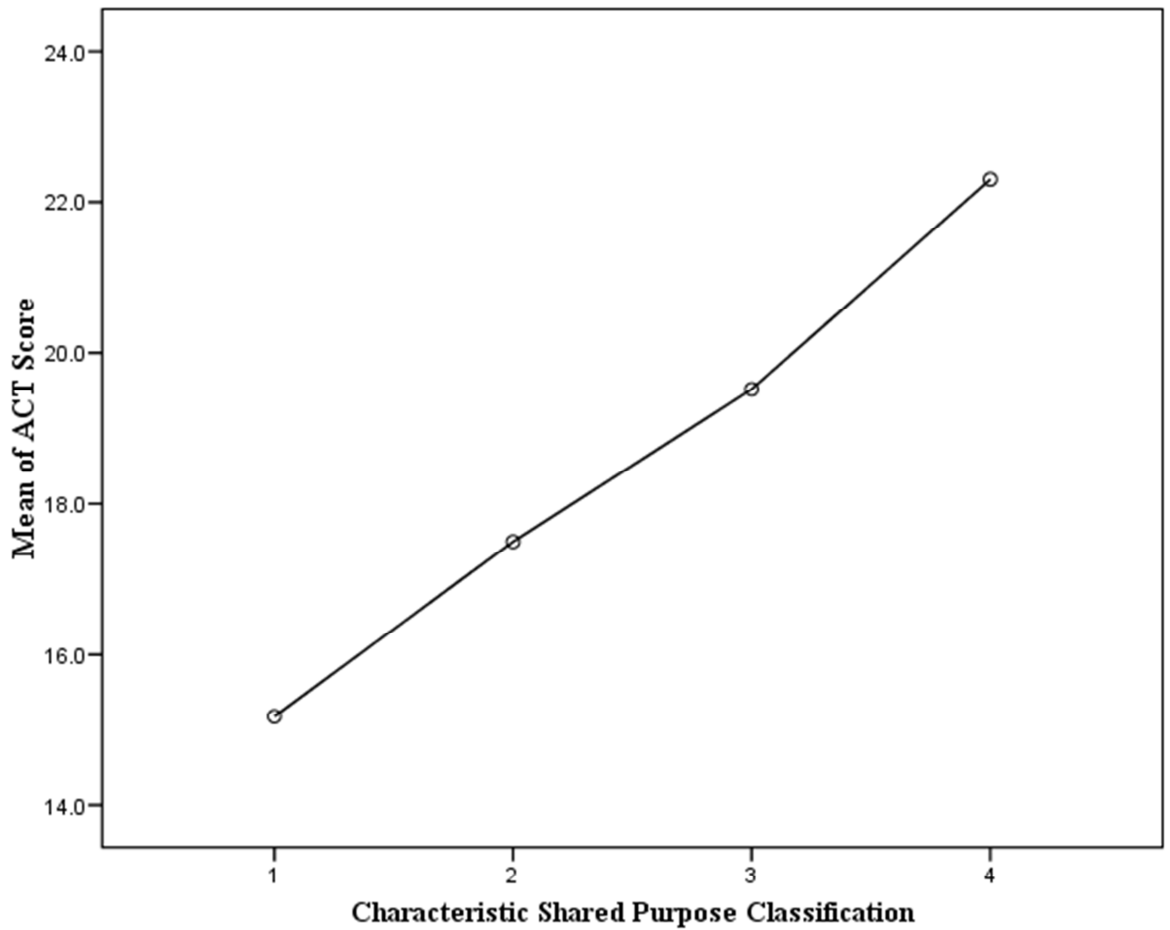


Figure 1.

Figure 1. Mean ACT scores according to shared purpose classification. ACT scores increase with each step in shared purpose classification. All pair-wise comparisons of mean score differences between shared purpose classifications were statistically significant.

Conclusions related to Hypothesis 1.

Reject Null Hypothesis 1 and accept Alternative Hypothesis 1, because there is sufficient evidence to indicate that there is a significant relationship between shared purpose and ACT Assessment scores.

Inferential Analysis relating to Hypothesis 2:

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between shared purpose and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status.

Alternative Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between shared purpose and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status.

The variable of shared purpose was ordinal with four categories, (1) not evident, (2) emerging, (3) operational, and (4) highly functional. The coding for shared purpose variable was done according to order of the variables with not evident = 1 and highly functional = 4. The variable of AYP status was dichotomous and was coded for analysis as yes = 1 no = 0.

Rank biserial correlation was attempted on the bi-variate relationship of the variables of shared purpose and AYP status. However, the relationship between the variables was not monotonic (Figure 2); therefore Cramer's V was used for analysis. Table Three presents a cross-tabulation of the independent variable of AYP status and dependent variable of shared purpose classification. Cramer's V results were statistically significant (.634, $p < .0005$), indicating a strong relationship between AYP Status and shared purpose classification. More schools with an AYP status of yes were highly functional, based upon shared purpose (21 schools, 63.6 % in the AYP = yes category), with 25.7% of all schools sampled in the highly functional shared purpose/AYP = yes group. Most of the schools were grouped in the AYP = no and either emerging or operational shared purpose groups (58 schools, 85.3% in the AYP = no group. None of the schools with an AYP = yes status were in the non-evident shared purpose classification.

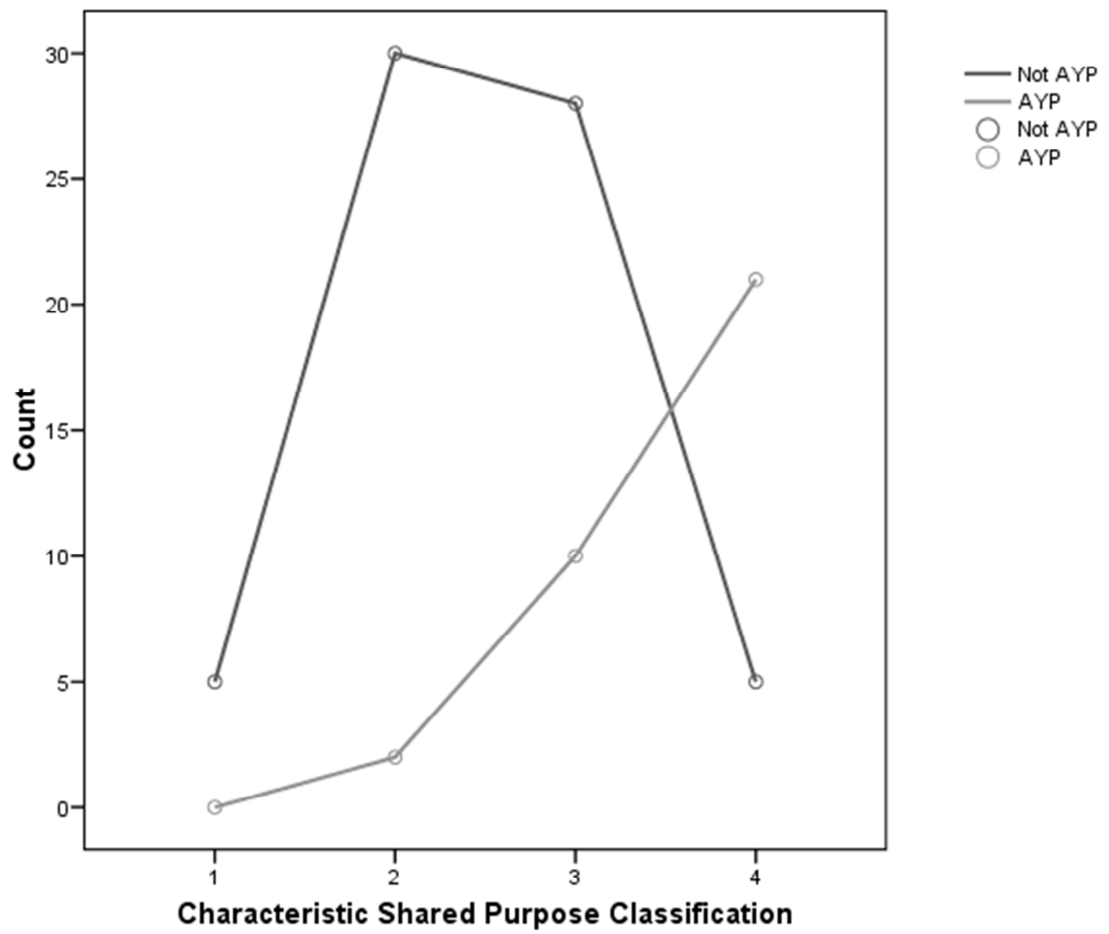


Figure 2.

Figure 2. Plot of classification of shared purpose (x-axis), and number of schools (y-axis) according to AYP status (yes vs. no). More AYP schools are associated with highly functional shared purpose.

Table 2

Crosstabulation for Hypothesis 2: AYP status vs. Shared Purpose Status (N=101)

AYP Status	Shared Purpose Classification				Total
	Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional	
AYP = Yes					
Count	5	30	28	5	68
% within AYP = Yes	7.4	44.1	41.2	7.4	100.0
AYP = No					
Count	0	2	10	21	33
% within AYP = No	0.0	6.1	30.3	63.6	100.0
Totals					
Count	5	32	38	26	101
% within AYP Code	5.0	31.7	37.6	25.7	100.0

Conclusions related to Hypothesis 2.

Reject Null Hypothesis 2 and accept Alternative Hypothesis 2, because there is sufficient evidence to indicate that there is a significant relationship between shared purpose and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status.

Chapter 4 began with a description of the participants in the study. Descriptive statistics for the variables tested during inferential analysis were then presented and defined. Information pertaining to required assumptions for the inferential analysis was presented and all assumptions were met.

Hypothesis testing was then performed with Spearman's rank order correlation, ANOVA, and Cramer's V.

The overarching research question for this study was, "What is the relationship between shared purpose and academic performance of high schools in the state of Illinois?"

Two statistical hypotheses addressed the research question:

Alternative Hypothesis 1 stated that there is a significant relationship between shared purpose and ACT Assessment scores. Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Alternative Hypothesis 2 stated that there is a significant relationship between shared purpose and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status. Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Implications and Recommendations

The interest of this study was to examine the collective efficacy, or shared purpose, of school systems on the effects of academic performance. Though generally axiological and characteristically circumstantial, purpose forces a guiding, continuous process of influence and reflection. By providing aims and ideals for performance, the elements of involvement and achievement can be comprehended and incorporated.

The performance of individuals is a valued function of most communities, public education included; but a value hierarchy of shared purpose imposes a reason beyond self-actualization. This study has demonstrated that the modest task of shared purpose contributes to the process of learning in a systematic manner. A learning system that develops a dynamic framework of cooperation and opportunities is particularly crucial to academic achievement. The pedagogic practices of learning may not appear as a shared

function, but the findings of this research provides examples of how the potential purposes of good education can become the template of academic achievement.

The results of this study have a number of important implications: (1) the notion of learning may not be basically an individual process, but a collaborative or shared activity with regard to function and direction. (2) Shared purpose enables educators to frame content and intent into a relation of responsible responsiveness. (3) An educational ethos can be measured and correlated into evidence-based outcomes and practice.

Historically, educators acted as agents of the community; using long established values and selected skills as the shared purpose and universal aim for teaching. A school's curriculum would reflect discipline-oriented, standards-based education that required demonstrated competence and mastery. The unifying concept was the factory-like methods of assimilation, primarily arranged around the passive potential of the students. Years later, with the remarkable interest in educational excellence and achievement, trendy reform efforts would attempt to measure not the purpose of education, but the function. With the interest in mastery orientation and measurable outcomes, evidence of educational practice fueled the revitalization of academic excellence. The new dimensions of learning will not be revealed in educational theory or procedure, but in the particularly relevant practice of shared opportunity and experience.

There is, therefore, a need for more research that will usefully explore a broad relation of the value of collective purpose in education. In essence, the success of school systems may hinge on the potential of purposeful initiatives, developed with the entire school community in mind. This study is an invitation to consider, reflect, innovate, and implement the practice of shared purpose in education. All school administrators,

teachers, parents, and students should begin, or continue, the process of collective responsibility and reliance on each other for the excellence all are capable of developing.

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