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Accomplished Education Leaders' Perspectives on Competition, Capacity, Trust, and Quality

Robert Lee Williams
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Robert Williams

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Review Committee

Dr. Anne Hacker, Committee Chairperson,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Gary Kelsey, Committee Member,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Gema Hernandez, University Reviewer,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer
Eric Riedel, Ph.D.

Walden University
2019

Abstract

Accomplished Education Leaders' Perspectives on
Competition, Capacity, Trust, and Quality

by

Robert Williams

MA, University of Alaska-Anchorage, 2006

MEd, Columbia University, 1991

BS, University of Alaska - Fairbanks, 1986

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

May 2019

Abstract

From 2017 to 2019, the primary strategy to improve public schools in the U.S. was increasing competition through the expansion of charter schools and the promotion of vouchers to send public school students to private schools. The problem this presented was that key education leaders had not provided adequate input and feedback into this strategy. The purpose of this qualitative study was to gather the perspectives of accomplished education leaders on how Tiebout's theory of competition and the concept of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework impacted quality, trust, and capacity. Data were collected using semistructured interviews with a purposeful sample of 15 accomplished education leaders from the charter/school choice community and traditional public schools. Data were analyzed using Bernauer's modified three-phase method. School and classroom leadership, meaningful and informative assessment that guides instruction, substantive student engagement, and a focus on a strong curriculum and effective teaching were the key themes that aligned with quality, trust, and capacity. Education leaders did not see Tiebout education as a key driver that would alone improve the quality of public education. Leaders believed that some schools improved in response to Tiebout competition but also shared cautions on the diminishing returns, collateral damage, and equity concerns because Tiebout competition created winners and losers. Social change may be impacted by the results of this study in that the results define and share examples of healthy and unhealthy competition in public education. The results of this study can help inform policy makers and educators as they create opportunities that will enhance the long term personal and economic success of all U.S. students.

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Dedication

I dedicate this accomplishment to my parents, Bob and Phyllis Williams, for leading with a loving example and for inspiring a strong work ethic, and to my wife, Connie Williams, and children, Kevin and Cassidy Williams. Connie, Kevin, and Cassidy Williams, who have brought my life such joy and meaning.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Competition is a leading strategy for education policy that has been promoted in both the Obama and Trump administrations (CBS News, 2016; United States Department of Education [USDoED], 2010). The strategy to improve the capacity and quality of U.S. public education through competition takes many forms and has had many variations in policy. Increasing competition was part of the philosophical underpinnings found in policy efforts to increase the number of charter schools (Cummins, 2014; Martineau, 2013), decrease the influence of teachers unions (Marsh, 2016; Martinez, Cantrell, & Beilke, 2016; Moe, 2011), publicly evaluate schools with letter grades from A to F (Murray & Howe, 2017; Rouse, Hannaway, Goldhaber, & Figlio, 2007), provide public funds for students to attend private or religious schools through vouchers (Figlio & Hart, 2014; Ford, 2015; Ford & Andersson, 2016, 2017; Gooden, Jabbar, & Torres, 2016; Green, 2016), and enact “trigger law” legislation, which allows parents to vote to convert any traditional school to a more independent charter school (Kelly, 2012; Smith & Rowland, 2014; Stitzlein, 2015). The idea was that schools would improve if more schools are competing for students (Rouse & Barrow, 2009; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Friedman, 1997).

In 2010, the Obama administration promoted the expansion of charter schools and the restructuring of low-performing schools (USDoED, 2010). As a candidate, President Trump portrayed public education as a monopoly that needed to be disrupted because educators were focused on their own interests instead of those of their students (CBS

News, 2016). Trump described increasing competition among schools as the best way to improve education (CBS News, 2016; Trump, 2016; USDoED, 2017). Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, previously promoted and politically supported publicly funded vouchers in Michigan to send public school students to attend private schools (Zernike, 2016). Tiebout competition is a key U.S. strategy to improve the quality and capacity of public education. I conducted this study to develop a deeper understanding of exactly how Tiebout competition affects quality, capacity, and the degree of trust in public education.

Competition has not been the only strategy for improving public education systems. In 2003, the Canadian province of Ontario embraced a collaborative improvement strategy based on building trust and capacity in partnership with the school system's teachers (Rincon-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016). The Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework (Appendix A) does not mention competition but is focused on improving quality, building the capacity of schools to work together collectively, and doing so in way that required trusting relationships (Ontario Ministry of Education [OME], 2013). Canada performed well on international assessments (Rincon-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2013, 2014a, 2016a, 2016b), and Ontario made dramatic improvements in the rate of high school graduation, academic achievement, and in narrowing socioeconomic and ethnic achievement gaps (Rincon-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016).

The U.S. strategy of competition was based on motivating schools to improve by competing between each other for students and by developing systems that brought

market mechanisms to public education (Figlio & Rouse, 2006; Fullan, 2011; Friedman, 1997), The perspective of highly accomplished education leaders on the dynamics between competition, trust, capacity, and quality was examined in this study. Although U.S. business leaders have often been surveyed as to the state and quality of competition in the business community (Porter & Rivkin, 2012), the perspectives of U.S. education leaders has not been collected and consistently analyzed in similar ways. In this study, I examined the perspectives of U.S. education leaders on when, how, and if competition improves public education by improving quality, increasing capacity, and building trust. If these perspectives provide insights and information that result in improvements to the U.S. education system, millions of U.S. students can be positively impacted since the quality of public education affects overall academic achievement, lifetime earnings, social success, and health and quality of life (Autor, 2014; Cutler & Lleras-Muney, 2006; Oreopoulos & Salvanes, 2009).

The following sections of Chapter 1 include the study background, problem statement, purpose of the study, and the research question, along with the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Chapter 1 also includes the nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, the significance of the study, and the Chapter 1 summary.

Background

The 1983 *Nation at Risk* report stated in the opening paragraph that the United States is “being overtaken by competitors all over the world” (National Commission for Excellence in Education [NCEE], 1983, p. 6). The drop in the quality of education in the

United States and the lack of competitiveness were portrayed to be deserving of war if the change had been inflicted by a foreign enemy instead of self-inflicted (NCEE, 1983, p. 6). The report simultaneously questioned U.S. commitment and capacity to compete and questioned the level of trust that should be placed in the current public education system (NCEE, 1983).

The first paragraph of President Obama's opening letter in the *2010 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Blueprint for Reform* noted that 10 countries had recently surpassed the United States in terms of college completion rates (USDoeD, 2010). He warned that countries that "out-educate us today will out-compete us tomorrow" (USDoeD, 2010). In international assessment comparisons, the United States lagged behind dozens of countries in performance (OECD, 2013, 2014a, 2016a, 2016b).

Adam Smith is widely regarded as the father of modern economics (Montgomery & Chirot, 2015, p. 19). His 1776 treatise, *Wealth of Nations*, described the "invisible hand" of markets as being more efficient and productive than central planning (Smith, 1776). Tiebout (1956) and Friedman (1962, 1997) both advocated for finding ways to allow Smith's "invisible hand" of competition and markets to influence and shape public education policy and strategy. Friedman (1997) recommended vouchers as a mechanism to increase competition between schools by allowing students to attend private or public schools so that the schools would compete for students. President Trump advocated for increasing competition through vouchers (CBS News, 2016; Trump, 2016). Trump's Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, previously lobbied, campaigned, and funded efforts to increase vouchers in Michigan (Zernike, 2016).

U.S. policymakers have used competition as a strategy to leverage policy to increase competition between states and between schools. The 2010 *ESEA Blueprint for Reform* included a commitment to the expansion of school choice and the increase in the number of competing charter schools. The mechanism within the *Blueprint* for encouraging desired change was a competition between the states to conform to its guidelines, with the winners receiving generous federal *Race to the Top* grants.

Advocacy for using Smith's "invisible hand" of competition as a driver for increasing efficiency, effectiveness, quality, and capacity of government services occurred in 1956 (Tiebout, 1956). Economist Milton Friedman inspired the school choice movement by advocating for applying free market and competition mechanisms such as vouchers to public education (Friedman, 1962, 1997). School choice and enhancing competition through increasing the number of charter schools has been a component of education policy of the Obama administration (USDoED, 2010). The Trump administration has made competition and vouchers the centerpiece of their education policy (CBS News, 2016; Trump, 2016).

Many supporters of voucher programs to fund public school students to attend private schools also believe that traditional public schools will be motivated to improve to compete for the students in private or charter schools (Greene & Marsh, 2009; Musset, 2012). The *Blueprint* also required more rigorous teacher evaluation systems to be tied to student test scores (Newton, Darling-Hammond, Haertel, & Thomas, 2010) which enables ways to sort teachers, such as in 2010 when the LA Times published the names

of schools and teachers and their perceived effectiveness based on data analysis of their students' performance (Briggs & Domingue, 2011; Gabriel & Lester, 2013).

The theory of competition in education depends on families selecting a school for their child based on quality and on schools having the capacity to improve on their own because of increased competition. There is not a lot of understanding or coherence in terms of exactly how or if the strategies to enhance competition increase the quality, capacity, or degree of trust in public education or whether competition is the best dominant strategy for the United States. Competition has a long history, including legal case law, which defines types of competition that help or hurt capacity and public trust of the communities of business, Wall Street, and professional sports (Edmondson, 2012; Geist, 2012; Stallings & Bennett, 2003). The perspectives of leaders within those communities are routinely and often examined. However, the history of competition that helps or hurts capacity, trust, or quality in public education is less refined and reveals few points of consensus (Musset, 2012; Teske, Schneider, Buckley, & Clark, 2000). There is a gap in the literature because the perspectives of highly accomplished education leaders have not been thoroughly examined on a regular basis to better understand how competition is perceived and interpreted by the accomplished education leaders working with students and leading schools.

For this study, accomplished education leaders were selected from two prestigious and selective processes: members of the National Network of State Teachers of the Year (NNSTOY) and recipients of Aspen Pajara fellowships. NNSTOY members completed a highly competitive and rigorous selection and interview process to be the Teacher of the

Year for their state. Approximately 20 education leaders in the nation are selected each year to be Aspen Pahara Fellows. Aspen-Pahara Fellows are accomplished and highly recommended education leaders who have completed four multiday seminars that include completing a project over a 2-year time frame. I had a mixture of participants in this study from traditional public schools and charter/school choice schools. In this study, I examined the ways in which accomplished education leaders interpreted and experienced competition. This study has the potential to inform policymakers and the public as to whether the policies that promoted competition were perceived by education leaders as having had the desired effects of improving student learning in the classroom.

In the remainder of this chapter, I describe the problem statement, purpose of the study, research question, theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study, nature of the study, important definitions, assumptions, limitations, and significance of the study.

Problem Statement

The usefulness and importance of competition is a point of contention in the political divide between the school choice movement and staunch supporters of traditional public schools (Adamson, Astrand, & Darling-Hammond., 2016; Russakoff, 2015). Each side has competing studies and anecdotal examples that support their perspectives (Berends, 2015; Epple & Romano, 2008; Musset, 2012). Since competition was a primary key driver of education policy for President Trump and Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, a deeper examination was needed as to how and why competition impacts the quality, trust, and capacity of public education in the United States. This qualitative study was needed to probe deeper into the perceptions of

education leaders in what ways competition interacts with public education in terms of quality, capacity, and trust.

Purpose of the Study

In this qualitative study, I examined the effects of competition on the quality of public education from the perspectives of a purposeful sample of nationally recognized education leaders. For added specificity and the sorting of diverse types of competition, examples and stories of competition from in-depth interviews were examined through the lens of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework. For the analysis, I used qualitative data from open-ended interviews to describe the relationships between competition, trust, capacity, and quality.

Research Question

When examining education leaders' perspectives, stories, examples, and descriptions of competition through the lens of Ontario's K-12 school effectiveness framework, in what ways does competition affect public education in terms of quality, capacity, and trust?

Theoretical Framework

In this study, I examined public education using the theoretical framework of Tiebout competition. Tiebout competition is the theory that public goods and services such as education will be most effective and efficient in a market system where the providers and consumers of public goods face competition (Banzhaf, 2014; Banzhaf & Walsh, 2008; Tiebout, 1956). When the government provides a public service, often all citizens have equal access to the service. Citizens do not have to demonstrate how much

they are willing to pay for the service through a bidding process, which is a vital component of markets. Musgrave (1939) asserted, “The exclusion principle, which is essential to exchange; cannot be applied and the market mechanism does not work” (p. 335). Tiebout (1956) disagreed with the belief that market forces could not be applied to the supply of public goods. Tiebout competition states that communities may tax citizens at different rates and provide their citizens various levels of quality of education, health care, and public safety (Tiebout, 1956). If citizens had choices in where they work and live, they could move to the community that had the highest quality services they valued at the most efficient price. Tiebout viewed this model, where communities were competing for citizens, as a way to improve quality and efficiency by increasing the market forces of competition (Tiebout, 1956, p. 424). Tiebout competition and the applications of Tiebout competition is discussed further in Chapter 2.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, I examined competition within education through the conceptual framework of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework (see OME, 2013). The framework has five focus areas: assessment for as of learning, school and classroom leadership, student engagement, curriculum teaching learning, pathways planning programs, and home school community partnerships (OME, 2013). The framework stresses trust and collaboration by requiring assessment that is “collaboratively developed by educators” and by emphasizing “ongoing communication about learning is in place to allow students, educators and parents to monitor and support student learning” (OME, 2013, p. 14). The framework includes a focus on professional development that increases

capacity: “Job-embedded and inquiry-based professional learning builds capacity, informs instructional practice and contributes to a culture of learning” (OME, 2013, p. 19).

The framework does not mention competition. For this study, I asked accomplished education leaders to share examples, personal stories, experiences, and their perceptions about trust, capacity, quality, and competition. I also asked participants to describe which (if any) components of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework were most applicable within the context of their example, story, or perspective.

Trust, collaboration, and capacity are featured throughout the Ontario framework while competition is excluded. In this study, I classified aspects of competition described by respected education leaders while using the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework as a common reference point. Studies on competition and public education are mixed and often reach conflicting conclusions about the value of competition in public education (Angrist, Cohodes, Dynarski, Pathak, & Walters, 2016; Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Musset, 2012; Waslander, Pater, & van der Weide, 2010). In this study, I want to provide a voice to the perspectives of accomplished nationally recognized education leaders on Tiebout competition through the lens of a successful school improvement model.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was qualitative. I first explored the possibility of conducting a case study. The geographical diversity of the education leaders along with

the fact that all participants had different employers led me to the conclusion that I could not conduct the study as a single case study. I then explored the possibility of using a multiple case study approach but found evidence that multiple case study approaches often employ teams of researchers over long periods of time (see Stake, 2013). A multiple case study approach was beyond my capacity in terms of both data gathering and time requirements.

In this qualitative study, I used a social constructionist approach. Social constructionism seeks to construct reality through interpreting the experiences and perceptions of participants (Jun, 2012). Education advocates for and against competition believe and interpret the effects of competition in diverse ways. I examined the root social constructions of competition through the perspectives and experiences of highly accomplished education leaders. The components of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework were a common reference point, so nationally selected education leaders were able to reference their perceptions of the where and how of competition in public education.

The study consisted of open-ended interviews with 15 accomplished education leaders on how competition has affected the quality of public education through the lens of the Ontario School Effectiveness Framework. The interview data of accomplished education leaders were analyzed to develop different social constructions of competition in education. I analyzed the transcripts and recordings through a modified Bernauer's (2015) three phase process and through NVivo software. Preliminary coding focused on

components of the Ontario School Effectiveness Framework. I discuss coding and analysis more deeply in Chapter 3.

Definitions

Accomplished education leaders: Educators who have been evaluated through a selective and rigorous process and found to be highly effective. For the purpose of this study, participants were selected from the membership of NNSTOY or having completed the selective Aspen Pahara Fellowship. NNSTOY participants were selected through a rigorous process to be Teacher of the Year for their state. Aspen Pahara selects approximately 20 education leaders nationally once or twice a year to become Aspen Pahara Fellows.

Capacity: The ability of a student, teacher, school, or school system to achieve a competency, skill, goal, or mindset. The Ontario School Effectiveness Framework describes an overall school goal to help “all students develop their capacity to be independent, autonomous learners who are able to set individual goals, monitor their own progress, determine next steps, and reflect on their thinking and learning” (OME, 2013, p. 9).

Charter school: A publicly funded independent school organized and operated by a group of community members under the terms of a charter with a local, state, or national authority. Some states have charter schools running as semiautonomous organizations within their school districts. Other charter schools have a charter with the state and are competing for students and related funding within the local district (Wohlstetter, Wenning, & Briggs, 1995).

Parent trigger law: Various laws passed in some states that allow parents to act and vote to close a school in order to reopen the school as a charter school (Smith & Rowland, 2014).

Quality: How well a school system prepares all students to acquire skills and competencies. State, national, and international assessment results are often used as proxies for the quality of an education system (Ho, 2007). The achievement gaps between socioeconomic or ethnic groups on assessments of a school or school system are often also used as a proxy for the ability to educate all students (OECD, 2013).

Relational trust: The quality, honesty, and level of engagement of the interpersonal social exchanges that take place between stakeholders of a group. Relational trust may relate to students, educators, leaders, policymakers, parents, community leaders, or the general public in an education setting. Relational trust may also relate to the relationships between the various individuals or groups on a particular task or process (Bryk & Schneider, 1996).

School choice: An education reform effort that gives parents and students multiple choices of schools and programs that are not exclusively based on where the students live. Some variations emphasize access to private or religious schools, and others emphasize access to alternative public schools. The idea is that schools will improve when market mechanisms are introduced into public education where schools need to compete for students (Musset, 2012).

School voucher: A mechanism that allows the transfer of public funds to private or religious schools for the full or partial subsidization of the cost of the private school.

Vouchers provide public school students more options as to which schools they may attend and how much public money funds private schools (Musset, 2012).

Skimming /Creaming: The occurrence of opening a charter school or providing vouchers for public school students to attend a private school that results in skimming the highest achieving students from traditional public schools. The concern is that the traditional schools will be at a disadvantage after losing their top performing students, and the schools will be more stratified and segregated by academic performance, race, ethnicity, and family income (Epple & Romano, 2008; Friedman & Friedman, 1980; Jabbar, 2015; Lubienski & Lubienski, 2006; Musset, 2012).

Tiebout competition: A theory that the efficiency of markets for selling and buying private goods can also be applied to public goods, such as education or other public services, if participants are not restricted from moving to other jurisdictions (Tiebout, 1956).

Assumptions

In this study, I included several assumptions throughout the process of interviewing accomplished education leaders. I trusted that participants were honest in their answers throughout the process. I assumed that participants engaged in the process were focused on their related experiences and beliefs and honestly used the Ontario School Effectiveness Framework as a lens in their interviews. I also assumed that a 90-minute open-ended interview was enough time to access the deepest thinking and synthesis of each selected educational leader. I assumed I would be able to detect a drop-off in engagement or active participation with a participant so that I could provide

flexibility and alternatives to the participant that would yield the level of engagement that I sought.

I assumed that the precautions I took were adequate to ensure that I was competently fulfilling my role as the researcher. I am a member of the NNSTOY and am also an Aspen Pajara Fellow. In Chapter 3, I describe in more detail how I was able to bracket my firsthand experiences and conduct interviews without compromising my role as a researcher.

Limitations

In this study, I constructed the social reality of competition in education from the perspectives of accomplished education leaders from a variety of different backgrounds and experiences. Time was a limiting factor. For this study, I had a sample size of 15 accomplished education leaders. I also limited the participant interviews to no longer than 90 minutes. More participants and longer interviews may have resulted in more data; however, I had capacity and time constraints in my role as a single researcher.

Before conducting interviews, I was prepared for the possibility that my assumption that participants would engage deeply with the topic of competition in ways that shared positive or negative experiences could also be a limitation. I viewed the outlier sample of nationally recognized education leaders as a way to hopefully ensure a deeper level of engagement. I cannot generalize my findings to show geographical or regional differences in perspectives on competition with a sample size of 15 participants. Due to the limited sample size, I was not able to represent all perspectives.

Significance of the Study

Significance to Practice

In this study, I showed ways in which accomplished education leaders looked at competition in public education. Some of the conflicts around competition may gain more coherence and meaningfulness when examined through the lens of a focused capacity and trust building of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework. A deeper understanding of the different viewpoints about competition may decrease some education conflicts. The voice of accomplished education leaders may be helpful in providing examples of whether competition is increasing or decreasing capacity, trust, and quality. A shift from a focus on conflict to a focused school effectiveness framework by policymakers and educators has the potential to frame issues with a more coherent and positive vision.

Most Americans have learned that their overall cholesterol score does not tell the entire story in terms of the quality of their cardiovascular health. The cholesterol test needs to be broken down further into scores for LDL (bad cholesterol), which contributes to clogging arteries, and HDL (good cholesterol), which helps decrease plaque build-up and reduces artery clogging (Manninen et al., 1992; Trialists, 2015). In a similar manner, this study may help identify examples and places on the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework where competition has a helpful or hurtful effect on public education. Educators and policymakers may then have some guiding principles to be able to create a learning environment that amplifies the effects of helpful competition and mitigates the effects of hurtful competition.

Significance to Theory

Applying social constructionism to in-depth discussions with education leaders may yield insights into conflicts around competition in education that educators, the court system, administrators, policymakers, and communities have found difficult to reconcile. Professional and amateur sports, health care, the business community, and Wall Street have all developed several examples and criteria that differentiate helpful and hurtful competition in their respective fields. This study may help make similar contributions that help differentiate and describe the defining characteristics of helpful and hurtful competition in public education.

Furthermore, this study may provide a template to use school improvement frameworks as tools to understand complex relationships and develop strategies to solve what often seem intractable and difficult problems.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the study was limited to a sample of 15 accomplished education leaders in the United States who had insights into the quality of the U.S. public education system. I attempted to recruit education leaders who were members of teachers' unions and education leaders in leadership roles in the U.S. charter school community/school choice movement. I also sought highly accomplished leaders with experience and deep knowledge as practicing classroom teachers from both the elementary and secondary levels of teaching.

Many factors may impact the capacity, quality, or levels of trust in public education, but I confined this study to how competition impacts public education. Many

other frameworks exist that may also have help frame the impact of competition on quality, capacity and trust (see Childress, Elmore, Grossman, & King, 2011; National Education Association, 2015; Singapore Ministry of Education, 2012), but the scope of this study was the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework.

Significance to Social Change

From the 1983 *Nation at Risk* report to the 2010 *ESEA Blueprint for Reform*, there is agreement that developing a high-quality world class education system for U.S. students is crucial to be competitive not only economically but in terms of innovation, business and trade. The OECD is a forum for 34 democratic countries with market-based economies. OECD (2014a) emphasizes that a country's ability to provide high quality, effective education for its citizens is crucial for students "to achieve their full potential, participate in an increasingly interconnected global economy, and ultimately convert better jobs into better lives" (p. 3).

With wide agreement on the importance of public education, U.S. policymakers, educators, parents, and students need a clearer picture as to how competition is affecting public education in terms of trust, capacity, and quality. The perspectives of accomplished education leaders from this study can add to the literature base on how different types of competition impact the capacity of teachers, schools, and the educational system. The study can also add new perspectives on how competition impacts trust among students, educators, policymakers, parents, business leaders, and the general public. The lack of opportunity to a high-quality education is a barrier for numerous U.S. students. The voice of accomplished education leaders brings an on-the-

ground perspective that may be able to differentiate between factors that contribute to positive examples of competition and factors that contribute to negative examples of competition. Policymakers, educators, and education leaders may be able to use these insights as a road map to improve the overall capacity and quality of public education in ways that build trust while mitigating the aspects of competition that detract from trust, capacity, and quality. The trajectory of having a more accurate and meaningful roadmap would be a substantive positive social change that could be beneficial to the more than 50 million U.S. public education students.

Summary and Transition

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. In Chapter 1, I introduced Tiebout competition in U.S. public education as a leading education strategy for both the Obama administration and Trump administrations. The Obama administration explicitly supported the expansion of charter schools through the competitive *Race to the Top* grant process (USDoED, 2010). The Trump administration has made increasing competition in public education the centerpiece of its education strategy (CBS News, 2016; Trump, 2016; USDoED, 2017) by supporting policies to expand charters, school choice, and voucher programs (USDoED, 2017). Since competition is the dominant U.S. education strategy, accomplished education leaders' perspectives on competition were needed to better understand the positive and negative effects of competition in schools and school districts across the United States.

Competition has been an effective mechanism for the efficient distribution of private goods in ways that lower costs and reward innovation (Porter, 2008). Tiebout

competition was the theoretical framework for this study and is based on the belief that the quality of public goods such as public education can also be improved by competition (Tiebout, 1956).

I used a social constructionist approach to interpret experiences in a focused way. My focus was embedded within the central research question: to better understand the ways in which competition affects public education through the perspectives of accomplished education leaders. The conceptual framework, the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework, is an education improvement model based on increasing capacity, building trust, and improving quality and that does not mention competition (OME, 2013). The Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework is a frame of reference that allowed participants to share more deeply about the where and how of competition in their experiences.

Key terms were defined in Chapter 1 along with the study's assumptions and limitations. This study has significance to practice, theory, and social change because of the inherent high stakes of any strategy that seeks to improve the quality of education for the more than 50 million U.S. public education students.

In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the literature surrounding competition in public education and competition as it relates to the school choice movement. In Chapter 3, I present a detailed discussion of the methodology for the selection of education leaders and collection of qualitative data from the leaders through interviews. Chapter 4 addresses the results and findings of the study. In Chapter 5, I interpret the study findings and include recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Competition is the catalyst in a capitalist marketplace that rewards efficiency and innovation while providing the general public with higher quality and more advanced private goods at efficient prices (Porter, 2008; Porter & Heppelmann, 2014). Tiebout's (1956) theory extended competition as a way to improve the quality and efficient pricing of public goods. Friedman (1962) applied Tiebout competition as a way to improve public education. Policymakers in a few individual states have acted on those theories and began voucher experiments where students in low performing public schools attended private schools with public funding (Epple, Romano, & Urquiola, 2017; Musset, 2012). The Obama administration increased competition in public education on a national level through expansion of charter schools that are more autonomous and that compete to attract traditional public education students (USDoED, 2010). The Trump administration has made increasing competition the centerpiece of its education strategy and focus (CBS News, 2016; USDoED, 2017).

In this study, I examined the effects of competition on public education in terms of increasing capacity of the education system, improving the quality of student learning and effective teaching, and building trust among students, educators, leaders, policymakers, parents, and communities. I analyzed the effects of competition through the perspectives, examples, and stories of nationally recognized education leaders that are connected to the study's conceptual framework: the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework. This linkage allowed me to explore connections between competition and

the capacity and trust building components that many high achieving school systems have used to increase their effectiveness.

In this literature review, I examine the empirical evidence on the effects of competition within public education and also provide a description of the how competition has become a polarized issue in education. Some evidence on competition is encouraging with a positive effect on the quality of education for students (Angrist, Pathak, & Walters, 2013; Angrist et al., 2016; Center for Research on Education Outcomes [CREDO], 2015a; Hoxby, 2003). Other evidence has shown a minimal effect (Musset, 2012; Wolf et al., 2013) or even a negative effect for students (CREDO, 2009; Dynarski, Rui, Webber, & Gutmann, 2017; Figlio & Karbownik, 2016; Waddington & Berends, 2018). Since competition has been a dominant strategy for U.S. education policy (USDoED, 2010, 2017), the perspectives of accomplished education leaders are needed to better understand how education leaders experience competition and construct their perceptions of competition. In this chapter, I describe the literature search strategy, the theoretical foundation, the conceptual framework, a review of the literature, and a summary of the chapter.

Literature Search Strategy

I used several different search strategies to discover the literature base for studies that addressed the interaction between competition and the quality of public education. Databases accessed included Education Research Complete, SAGE Premier, ScienceDirect, Academic Search Complete, and Taylor and Francis Online.

Initial searches for scholarly journal articles about *competition* and the *quality of public education* yielded limited results. The keywords (*competition AND quality AND public education*) in Education Research Complete returned only 77 results, where only seven were directly related to my topic. I was unsure if my topic had a small literature base, or if I needed a better keyword selection strategy. After getting advice from my dissertation chair and having a meeting with a Walden librarian, I learned that my previous keyword selection had missed nearly all of the literature for my topic.

Tiebout competition is a theory that free markets work well for public goods such as schools. Journal articles about school vouchers often address the competitive effects and performance comparisons between traditional schools, charter schools, or vouchers to private schools. Further examination demonstrated that numerous articles about competition in education were categorized under the label of “school choice.” More comprehensive and focused search results were found by using combination search strings such as (*vouchers OR charter OR competition OR Tiebout OR school choice*) AND (*primary OR elementary OR secondary*) AND *AB policy*. Searching within AB (abstracts) was helpful because the search captured relevant articles that may not have the keywords in the title but did have the keywords in the abstract. When I searched within abstracts, I was also able to miss nonrelevant articles that mentioned a keyword as a tangential reference within the article but not in the abstract.

I found articles focused on competition involving K-12 schools and that also included the word *policy* in the abstract. Some sample search strings that I used for Education Research Complete are found in Table 1.

Table 1

Search Terms Used With Education Research Complete Database

Search term	Articles	Useful articles
<i>(vouchers OR charter OR competition or tiebout or school choice) AND (primary OR elementary) AND AB policy</i>	475	146
<i>(tiebout AND competition AND education) AND (primary OR elementary OR high school)</i>	22	21
AB Tiebout	25	22
<i>AB trust AND education AND (primary OR elementary OR high school) AND AB policy</i>	85	21

The bibliographies of recent dissertations and books about *competition* and *public education* were helpful in finding my literature base. I was able to find more recent articles on my topic by examining important, influential articles on my topic and then using the citations feature within Google Scholar.

Theoretical Framework

Origin and Source of Tiebout Competition

If competition is to be a lever to improve the quality of public education, the early descriptions of competition are important. In 1776, the Scottish economist and philosopher, Adam Smith, described in the *Wealth of Nations* the counterintuitive idea that individuals seeking to maximize their own self-interest through competition and markets could result in a better distribution of goods than through any central planning mechanism.

Smith (1776, Book IV) stated,

[Every] individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. ... he intends only his own

security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest, he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. (p. 455-456)

Smith portrayed the invisible hand as a protagonist. The invisible hand converted the works of individuals focused only on self-interest to work that promoted the greater good for all of society in better ways than any central planning could have achieved. The idea that competition is a benevolent, guiding, invisible hand that maximizes the benefits to all citizens has been considered a foundational concept for both capitalism and economics (Samuels, 2011). In the more than 1,500 pages that Smith wrote, the invisible hand was only mentioned three times and never discussed in detail as to what the words “invisible hand” truly meant. The mythical use of the term *invisible hand* that is perceived as the foundational concept of capitalism does not deepen one’s understanding of competition any more than merely stating “something magical happened” (Samuels, 2011, p. xxii). By contrast, Smith (1776) used all of Chapter VII in *Book I* to describe in detail the ways in which competition, supply, and demand interacted to determine the market price for goods and services. The details for setting a market price are specific and explained. The specifics of the invisible hand are mysterious and vague (Samuels, 2011). There is a need for more specifics and details as to how competition works in public education.

Examples of Competition for Private Goods and Services

Competition in the selling and purchasing of private goods has numerous examples of both lowering the cost and improving the quality of products. The first 1 GB 3.5” computer hard drives had profit margins near 60% in 1992. By 2003, competition with rivals, new competitors, and innovation in technology caused the profit margin to fall to 15% for disk drives that were far superior in performance and quality (Christensen & Raynor, 2013).

Numerous successful companies positioned themselves within the consumer or business market in ways that lowered costs and improved quality. The Japanese fuel-efficient cars were competitively priced and delivered added consumer value during the high price of fuel in the 1970s (Kim & Mauborgne, 2004). When first introduced, Compaq’s ProSigna computer server had twice the printing and file storage capacity of its competitors and was one third of the competition’s price (Kim & Mauborgne, 2004). Southwest Airlines positioned itself at a competitive advantage within the airline industry. Southwest used a standardized fleet of planes to keep maintenance costs low. Aircraft utilization was high due to unassigned seats and 15-minute gate turn-around times. Ticket prices were also kept low by flying short distances between smaller airports (Porter, 1996).

Competition is such a key universally accepted factor in the price of goods and services that average profit margins vary based on the degree of competition within the industry sector. The returns on invested capital from 1992 to 2006 was 13.8% for baked goods and 31.7% for pharmaceuticals (Porter, 2008). Individuals have several options for

selecting a brand or type of bread but very few choices for a specific prescribed medication that does not have a generic substitute. Competition deeply impacts consumer prices and business profit margins (Porter, 2008). The price of a product and the efficiency of competition are affected by geographical factors and how products are positioned within the market (Xu & Chi, 2017).

The importance of competition to the United States is explicit through the work of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and its Bureau of Competition. The FTC is unambiguous about the value and benefits of competition.

The FTC (2018) website stated,

Free and open markets are the foundation of a vibrant economy. Aggressive competition among sellers in an open marketplace gives consumers, both individuals and businesses, the benefits of lower prices, higher quality products and services, more choices, and greater innovation. The FTC's competition mission is to enforce the rules of the competitive marketplace: the antitrust laws. These laws promote vigorous competition and protect consumers from anticompetitive mergers and business practices (para. 1).

The History of Tiebout Competition

The idea of exposing government services to the forces of competition and open markets was not taken seriously until the 1950s. Musgrave (1939, p. 214) had compared the market price for a good to the subjective decision of policymakers deciding the balance between how much to tax citizens and determining the quality and quantity of public government services to be provided. Prices for products or stocks are set by the

willingness of sellers and buyers to agree on a specific price. High and low prices are tempered by the willingness of the buyer and seller to agree. Policymakers do not have a market that finds the best tax rate or the best level of government services to provide. Samuelson (1954) described this failure to find a market price as “the impossibility of [an] instantaneous decentralized solution” (p. 388).

A central premise of markets is that formal or informal bidding between buyers and sellers will result in a market price. However, when a child enrolls in a neighborhood public school, there is no bidding process to find the maximum amount the child’s parents are willing to pay. Musgrave (1939) argued the consensus view at the time that applying markets to public goods like education simply “does not work.” (p. 335).

Tiebout (1956) responded that communities do not all have the same tax rates for public goods and services and do not make identical investments in health care, public safety, or education. Citizens can move from a community that has high taxes or that does not offer high quality services that citizens value. Tiebout argued that this informal market where citizens are free to move to higher quality or lower cost communities would lead to competition and the efficient delivery of public goods and services. Tiebout’s competition for public goods such as education is based on the theory that communities will compete for citizens by offering the highest quality services at the best price (Tiebout, 1956, p. 424).

Tiebout models for competing communities have been expanded and refined since 1956 (Hanushek & Yilmaz, 2010, 2013). Hanushek and Yilmaz (2013) used a refined

Tiebout model to show restricting choice in communities can yield results where all households are worse off (p. 852).

Tiebout Competition in Public Education

The role of competition and markets in providing public services involved a disagreement between three economists: Musgrave, Samuelson, and Tiebout (Tiebout, 1956). The initial idea of improving the quality of public education by increasing competition between and within schools also came from an economist and not from teachers, principals, superintendents, or other education leaders. The idea's most influential early proponent was the economist Milton Friedman. Other early proponents for changing the U.S. education system to a competition-based market system included the writer Frank Chodorov, the novelist Ayn Rand, the economist Murray Rothbard, and the university professor Myron Lieberman (Currie-Knight, 2014, p. 7).

The impetus for the economist Milton Friedman's early writings on education was to examine education through the lens of competition, free markets, and his "philosophy of a free society" (Friedman, 2006, p. vii). While Friedman acknowledged that the desire for education was unique from desires for material possessions since there are community and economic advantages to having an educated population; he criticized the government's monopolistic role of both funding and providing compulsory education (Friedman, 1962, p. 89).

Although Friedman and his wife were satisfied with the quality of their own public education (Friedman, 2006, p. vii), his criticism of government-provided public education was based on a strong belief in the efficiency and power of competition and

markets. Friedman's solution was to decouple government funding of education from government provided education. Government would provide a standardized subsidy described as a voucher to parents for the education of their children. Parents could redeem the voucher payment in the school of their own choosing. Non-profit organizations, religious organizations, and for-profit organizations would also compete for the business of providing for the education of children (Friedman, 1962, p. 89).

Friedman (1962) believed market efficiency would cause an important, benevolent change where "a wide variety of schools would spring up to meet demand ... competitive enterprise is likely to be far more efficient than nationalistic enterprise or enterprises to serve other purposes" (p 91).

The theory of Tiebout competition in public education has a primary premise that all schools will improve in order to compete for students and that parents and families will sort through options for their child's school and select a school based on quality (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Musset, 2012). The gap in the literature is the need to gather the perspectives of highly accomplished education leaders to better understand how the primary premise of Tiebout competition is working in U.S. schools and districts. The research question of this study is designed to gather examples, stories, and descriptions from education leaders that will confirm or challenge the theory that Tiebout competition improves quality, capacity, and trust within public education.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, I examined the perceptions of education leaders on competition through the lens of Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework. Academically high-

achieving states, provinces, or countries have used school effectiveness frameworks to frame the complex relationships needed to increase capacity, build trust, and improve student achievement in schools (Campbell, Osmond-Johnson, Faubert, Zeichner, & Hobbs-Johnson, 2017; Childress, Elmore, Grossman, & Akinola, 2004; Childress et al., 2011; OME, 2013; Singapore Ministry of Education, 2012). The Canadian province of Ontario has demonstrated strong academic achievement on the Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD, 2013, 2014a, 2016a, 2016b). On the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2012 exam, 35 countries had stronger overall academic achievement than the United States (OECD, 2014a, p 19).

In this study, I used the Ontario School Effectiveness Framework which included the themes of increasing capacity, trust, and collaboration throughout the framework. The ability to increase capacity has strong connections with improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools (Beaver & Weinbaum, 2012; Bennett, Ylimaki, Dugan, & Brunderman, 2014; Fullan, 20011; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2017; OECD, 2013). Other frameworks and models have included capacity as a primary driver impacting the quality of education (Childress et al., 2004; Childress et al., 2011; National Education Association, 2015). Capacity-building through collaboration is a central theme in the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework. Assessment, school leadership, instruction and planning are key components within the framework that emphasize learning together and working as a team in order to build the capacity to improve the quality of student learning and success within a school (OME, 2013).

Another theme within the Ontario framework and similar models is the need for trust. Trust can be defined as the overlapping descriptions of benevolence, reliability, honesty, competence, and openness (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). School system performance and student achievement have a positive correlation with high levels of relational trust (Bryk & Schneider, 1996; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2017). The Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework explicitly states the need to build trust with students, teachers, school leaders, parents, and community members by ensuring that they are “engaged and welcomed, as respected, valued partners in student learning” (OME, 2013).

One theme not found in the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework is competition. If competition is a lever to improve public education, the interaction between competition and the education improvement models is ambiguous. Using the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework as a conceptual framework allowed interviewed education leaders to offer specificity as to how and in what ways competition interacts with trust, capacity-building, and quality.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

Tiebout Competition in the Early Childhood Head Start Program

While separate and different from charter and voucher programs, President Lyndon Johnson’s early childhood education program Head Start serves as an example of a government program which later introduced Tiebout competition to improve quality. Head Start began in 1965 as a federal intervention in the *War Against Poverty*. By 2016, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) ran the Head Start

program through renewable contracts with approximately 1,700 different service providers serving close to one million low income students and pregnant mothers (Samuels, 2017).

Studies of the effectiveness of the Head Start program have been mixed. In the most comprehensive longitudinal evaluation, Head Start students showed some statistically significant improvements when compared to similar non-Head Start students in the 1st grade (USDHHS, 2010) but those differences are not statistically significant by the 3rd grade (Puma et al., 2012). However, Head Start may have long term positive effects for Head Start students and their offspring with higher rates of educational attainment, lower rates of teen pregnancy, and lower rates of criminal activity (Barr & Gibbs, 2017).

Policymaker support for the program is also mixed. Some policymakers have suggested eliminating the program, converting the program to block grant for states to run, or changing to vouchers to allow parents to purchase their own childcare (Samuels, 2014). Other policymakers focus on Head Start's possible long term benefits for students and the intergenerational benefits that help break cycles of poverty. Those policymakers often stress that Head Start cannot be an inoculation for low quality elementary schools that children of poverty often experience (Leonhardt, 2013).

In 2011, the Obama administration introduced Tiebout competition to the awarding of Head Start contracts. Head Start providers were graded on a scale of one to seven in instructional support, emotional support, and classroom organization using a uniform assessment: *The Classroom Assessment Scoring System*. HHS took providers

that scored in the lowest 10% for instructional support, emotional support, and classroom organization and opened their renewal contract to competition (Derrick-Mills et al., 2016; Samuels, 2017).

Derrick-Mills et al. (2016) examined the effects of Tiebout competition on Head Start and found that differences in how different teams scored the same programs using the same assessment called into question the precision of how program quality was being measured. Despite uncertainty as to the precision of the measurement of quality, Derrick-Mills et al. (2016) found that providers subjected to competition often made changes to improve the quality of their programs including reducing class size and increasing the percentage of instructors with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Even providers who were the only applicant for the Head Start contract in their area but faced the possibility of competition made changes to improve the quality of their program (Derrick-Mills et al., 2016).

The lowest 10% threshold for competition had some unintended consequences. Head Start programs did not score consistently the same in the three areas of assessment. Head Start programs in general had high emotional support and classroom organization scores and had low instructional support scores. The result was that many programs with emotional support and classroom organization scores that were fairly strong faced competition for being in the lowest 10% where some programs with very low instructional support scores did not face competition. On the 1 to 7 scale, some programs with relatively high emotional support scores of 5.69 were forced to compete. In contrast, some programs with very low scores of 2.3 in instructional support did not have to

compete (Samuels, 2017). Due to some of the unintended consequences of the lowest 10% rule for triggering Tiebout competition, USDHHS revised the competition rules to exempt programs from facing competition due to emotional support or class organization if those programs have scores of 5, 6, or 7 on the CLASS assessment. HHS also removed the lowest 10% rule for instructional support so that more than 10% of the programs can be designated for competition (CLASS condition of the Head Start Designation Renewal System, 2017, 82 Fed. Reg. 57905).

Tiebout competition is not the only way to increase the proportion of Bachelor of Arts instructors or decrease class sizes in Head Start programs. Different program improvement strategies may have yielded comparable results; however, even though the measurement for quality was not precise, programs that faced competition did increase the quality of multiple educational inputs. The 2011 lowest 10% rule for determining which programs faced competition had some unintended consequences and was revised in 2017.

For the early years of the Trump administration, Tiebout competition was the primary driver of U.S. education policy as a strategy to improve public education. In this study, I sought to better understand the perspectives of accomplished education leaders as to how they experience and respond to competition. I also wanted to find if there are any unintended consequences of competition that are counterproductive that may be mitigated through policy changes.

Tiebout Competition in Charter Schools

Competition has also been promoted through the expansion of public charter schools which allow organizations or parents to create new schools that are different from the traditional neighborhood public school. Some states have charter schools outside of the public school districts which compete for students and revenue (Russakoff, 2015). A charter school system that is growing and attracting students may also be reducing students and funding from the traditional school district (Russakoff, 2015).

Charter schools operate with more autonomy and have more flexibility in how schools are run. The federal *Race to the Top* grant in 2010 included an emphasis on expanding charter school opportunities as it allowed federal funds to support the efforts of charter school management organizations or authorizers to start new charter schools or expand current charter schools (USDoED, 2010, p. 37). Corrective actions for low-performing schools included the restart option which allowed struggling schools to be converted to one or more charter schools by closing the school and reopening the school “under the management of an effective charter operator, charter management organization, or education management organization” (USDoED, 2010, p. 12). States competed for additional federal funding by completing applications for education stimulus funds. Applications were more competitive if policymakers had changed their policy to expand competition by increasing the number of charter schools (Medina, 2010). The effort resulted in most states adjusting policy to be more favorable towards charter schools which made the states more competitive for receiving stimulus grants.

Evidence of the Effectiveness of Charter Schools

Research on charter school effectiveness usually uses standardized test scores in reading or mathematics as a measurement for academic achievement while comparing charter and traditional public schools. Studies fall broadly into two categories: experimental or nonexperimental. Nonexperimental studies compare charter school and traditional school performance but do not have a random selection process since charter school students self-selected to attend a charter school. Some nonexperimental studies compare academic performance by comparing charter schools and traditional schools while adjusting for socioeconomic and prior achievement differences. The studies are not experimental since families self-selected to send their child to a charter school.

Nonexperimental charter school studies. Witte, Weimer, Shober, and Schlomer (2007) examined two years of student test data to compare 130 Wisconsin charter schools to traditional schools for grades 4 and 8. Witte et al. (2007) concluded that overall charter schools outperformed traditional schools in terms of students reaching proficient performance levels (p. 26). Hanushek, Kain, Rivkin., and Branch (2007) compared 248 charter schools with similar traditional schools. Traditional schools outperformed charter schools for the first two years students attended charter schools and low-achieving charter students performed much worse. Booker, Gilpatric, Gronberg, & Jansen, D (2007) found charters having no effect on improving academic achievement over traditional schools in a study of 179 Texas charter schools. The three nonexperimental charter studies of 2007 found three different results: charters having a positive impact, charters having a negative impact, and charters having no impact.

Zimmer et al. (2009) compared 231 charter schools in seven states and districts to comparison traditional public schools. Zimmer et al. (2009) found charters underperforming traditional public schools in two states and performing the same as traditional schools in five states. Other nonexperimental studies found charters performing similar or worse than traditional public schools in North Carolina (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006) and Florida (Sass, 2006).

Positive results are often confined by geography. Abdulkadiroğlu, Angrist, Dynarski, Kane, and Pathak (2011) found middle and high school charters outperforming traditional schools in a study of 28 Boston charter schools. The Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) examined 580 charters in Texas (CREDO, 2015b), 355 charter schools in Ohio (CREDO, 2014a), and found charters having a negative impact where traditional schools outperformed charter schools in reading and mathematics. CREDO found positive outcomes for charter schools in mathematics and reading in studies of 197 charter schools in New York City (CREDO, 2017a), 91 charter schools in Louisiana (CREDO, 2013b), and 297 charter schools in Michigan (CREDO, 2013c). Positive results for charters do not necessary imply consistency in quality among charter schools. Joy and Arellano (2016) noted that although Michigan charter school students outperform traditional school peers (CREDO, 2013a, 2015a) that almost one half of the 2013-2014 Michigan charters performed in the lowest 25% of all public schools on the state assessment.

Charter school studies often show differing results dependent on grade level or subject matter. Betts, Rice, Zau, Tang, and Koedel (2006) studied 21 charter schools in

San Diego and found charters outperformed traditional schools in mathematics at the middle school level but underperformed traditional schools in middle school reading and elementary mathematics. In a study of 28 Idaho charter schools, Ballou, Teasley, and Zeidner (2008) found charter schools had stronger performance at the elementary school level but the same performance at the middle school level. CREDO (2014b) studied 918 California charter schools and found charter students outperforming traditional students in reading and underperforming traditional schools in mathematics. Betts & Tang (2011) found in a meta-analysis study that charter schools had slightly better or the same performance as public schools in elementary mathematics and reading and in middle school mathematics.

Nonexperimental multistate CREDO studies. The CREDO studies have large data-sharing agreements with charter schools and state education agencies. CREDO (2009) compared the academic performance of charter schools to traditional public schools using a large data set that captured more than 65% of U.S. charter school students (Myron & Applegate, 2009). CREDO used a methodology of matching each charter student with a statistical average of several similar students from schools that fed both the charter school and traditional public schools. Each charter student was matched with other public school students that had the same prior standardized test score, gender, grade level, race / ethnicity, free or reduced price lunch status, English Language Learner status, and Special Education status. Hoxby (2009) noted that the matching of virtual students by scores to within 0.1 standard deviations of the charter student was quite different than the same test score and that the averaged scores for a virtual twin reduced

the measurement error for the traditional school students but not the charter school student. CREDO was unable to create a virtual twin for approximately 15% of the charter school students in the study (CREDO, 2009, p. 18). CREDO (2009) found charter school students had 0.01 of a standard deviation less growth in learning in Reading and 0.03 of a standard deviation less growth in learning in Math than their traditional public school students (CREDO, 2009, p. 22). Both differences were small but statistically significant. CREDO (2009) also found 17% of charter schools performed significantly better than their traditional school counterparts, 37% had performed significantly worse, and 46% had performed roughly equivalent (CREDO, 2009, p. 44). Myron and Applegate (2009) noted some technical concerns with the virtual twin methodology and that the statistically significant results are not necessarily practically meaningful when the large data set of 1.7 million students with often more than 40 predictor variables would guarantee that the smallest differences would be statistically significant. Myron and Applegate (2009) argued the CREDO study fell in line with previous studies that showed charter schools perform as well or slightly worse than traditional public schools.

CREDO (2013a) used the same virtual twin methodology to examine the charter student performance of the same states that were examined in 2009 and also expanded the comparison to include more states (27 states and the District of Columbia). The overall comparison to 2009 showed similar charter student and traditional student academic performance. Charter school students outperformed traditional school students by 0.01 standard deviations in reading and underperformed traditional students by 0.005 standard deviations in mathematics. CREDO (2013) noted that charter school student performance

benefited in 2013 from a drop in academic performance in traditional school students compared to their performance in 2009 and due to about 8% of the 2009 charter schools having closed. Maul & McClelland (2013) stressed small concerns with the virtual twin methodology but stressed that charter schools and traditional schools overall have nearly identical academic performance. CREDO (2013a) found in the 27-state study and the District of Columbia found in reading that 25% of the charter schools performed better than traditional schools, 19% performed worse, and 56% performed the same. In mathematics, 29% of the charter schools performed better, 31% performed worse, and 40% performed the same.

CREDO (2015a) examined the performance of urban charter schools and traditional schools in a study of 41 different urban regions across the United States finding charter schools outperforming traditional public schools in mathematics and reading. Maul (2015) criticized the CREDO characterizations of the performance differences as substantial since charter schools explained “less than one tenth of one percent of the differences in test scores” (p. 6). As a contrasting example, Dobbie and Fryer (2013) examined high performing charter schools and found that 50% of the variation in school effectiveness could be explained by the quality of teacher feedback, the effective use of data for adjusting instruction, the use of effective tutoring, and high expectations.

Taken as a whole, non-experimental charter school studies have shown small differences in academic performance between charter schools and traditional public

schools without a consistent theme of stronger performance at a specific grade level or subject area.

Experimental studies of charter schools. Experimental studies of charter schools capitalize on the random lotteries that many charter schools use to select students when more parents have signed up for a charter school than there are spaces available. The experimental studies are limited to the more popular charter schools that have an over-subscribed student and parent interest. Experimental studies compare and follow the academic performance of the students who were randomly selected and attended the charter school (charter lottery winners) with those students who were not randomly selected to attend the charter school (charter lottery losers). The studies are experimental because the random selection process allows the comparison of a control group of students (did not attend a charter school) and a treatment group of students (did attend a charter school). Although the selection of students is random due to the charter student selection process, factors that affect the quality of the comparisons include the degree that the charter school is oversubscribed, the percentage of students selected for a charter school that choose not to attend, the number of students not selected for a charter school that attend a different charter school or a private school, and the attrition rates for the control and treatment groups when students later leave charter schools or the traditional schools.

Unlike nonexperimental studies, many experimental studies on charter schools have shown charter schools outperforming traditional schools. Angrist, Dynarski, Kane, Pathak, and Walters (2012) studied one over-subscribed charter school in Lynn,

Massachusetts and found stronger performance for charter students (lottery winners) than traditional public school students. Limited English proficient students, special education students, and lower achieving students in the charter school demonstrated some of the strongest achievement gains when compared to traditional schools (Angrist et al., 2012).

Experimental studies of three charter schools in Chicago (Hoxby & Rockoff, 2005), one charter school in New York City (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011), and eight charter schools in Boston (Abdulkadiroğlu et al., 2011) also showed stronger performance for charter schools than traditional public schools. McClure, Strick, Jacob-Almeida, and Reicher (2005) studied one charter school in San Diego that did not show stronger performance than traditional public schools.

Hoxby, Murarka, and Kang, J. (2009) found charter schools outperforming traditional public schools in an experimental study of 42 over-subscribed charter schools in New York City. Reardon (2009) criticized the study for omitting some lower performing charters, exaggerating the possible cumulative effects of charters, and using the prior year test data in grades 4 through 12 which would have occurred after the lotteries had taken place. Hoxby et al. (2009) also found considerable variation in performance between the 42 schools with 19% performing worse than traditional schools and the remainder having a positive impact with 10% showing large academic performance gains.

Gleason, Clark, Tuttle, and Dwoyer, E. (2010) conducted a large \$5 million dollar experimental study (Myron & Applegate, 2009) in 15 states on 36 over-subscribed charter middle schools. The overall findings showed substantial variation in quality

among the charter schools and that the charter schools had similar academic achievement to traditional public schools (Gleason et al., 2010). Of the 28 charter sites studied, 17 performed worse in reading than traditional public schools and 11 were better. In mathematics, 18 sites had academic achievement less than traditional public schools and 10 sites had better performance (Gleason et al., 2010).

Experimental studies on over-subscribed schools that use lotteries would be the more popular charter schools with high demand. Several positive studies on a few charter schools (Angrist et al., 2012; Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Hoxby & Rockoff, 2005) have shown strong positive impacts for charter schools. Larger experimental studies (Hoxby et al., 2009; Gleason et al., 2010) have shown substantial variation in quality across charter schools that may suggest that the results from smaller experimental studies cannot be generalized beyond their geographical location and local context. Variation of impact also occurs across grade levels. Tuttle et al. (2015) found the KIPP school network had better performance than traditional public schools but the stronger performance was larger at the elementary and middle school grade levels than at high schools. With substantial variation in quality found in experimental studies, there is a need to study the perspectives of accomplished education leaders on how the addition of Tiebout competition of charter schools is experienced within communities and schools.

Vouchers and Voucher-Like Support for Private and Religious Schools

First attempt resulted in failure. A criticism of public education from the competition perspective is that public schools and teachers have a monopoly and do not experience the competition of the marketplace to improve (Friedman, 1997). In 1973, the

U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity funded a plan for the New Hampshire State Department of Education to bring a market and competition approach to public education (Carl, 2008). The plan was largely opposed by public teachers and their unions. The urban school districts opted not to participate in the idea to have schools compete against each other for students through voucher subsidies. Rural school districts participated in planning for the vouchers but the plans were voted down by the rural communities resulting in failure for the first effort to bring vouchers to U.S. schools (Carl, 2008, p. 589).

Vouchers in Chile. One of the first large experiments with competition in education occurred in a Chile under the 1974-1990 rule of General Pinochet. After coming to power in a coup d'état, Pinochet met with Milton Friedman and was influenced by Chileans that followed Friedman's philosophy (Adamson et al., 2016; Portales & Vasquez-Heilig, 2014). Pinochet implemented several ideas to increase competition including subsidizing private schools through student vouchers and increasing the number of for-profit and private school offerings (Adamson et al., 2016). Chile's voucher system often resulted in schools selecting students based on prior academic performance and financial status (Hsieh & Urquiola, 2006). The effect included a thousand new private schools entering the education market in often wealthier communities. In general, many high-achieving students left public schools for private schools (Hsieh & Urquiola, 2006).

Although Pinochet's rule ended in 1988, since then Chile has improved in terms of academic performance from 2000 to 2009; however, Chile is still substantially below

the average performance of countries that participate in the PISA exam and is below average in terms of academic performance of disadvantaged students (OECD, 2014b, p. 1). On the 2012 PISA exam, Chile had the largest gender gap out of all other countries in terms of boys outperforming girls in mathematics (OECD, 2014b, p. 2). An examination of home addresses and the school choices that Chilean parents make showed that disadvantaged parents are far less likely to choose high-achieving schools for their children (Alves et al., 2015).

As the first country to fully embrace Tiebout competition and markets in education, Chilean academic performance is below average and disadvantaged students did not gain the benefits that Friedman originally envisioned through increased competition. Friedman's perception that competition would improve performance did not come to fruition in Chile's voucher system but did provide evidence that the introduction of Tiebout competition does not necessarily ameliorate possible skimming and equity concerns.

Vouchers in the United States. Attempts to bring Tiebout competition to public education through vouchers in the United States came through the establishment of limited voucher programs available to economically disadvantaged students. One of the first examples is the 1990 Milwaukee Parent Choice Program which established state funding for poor students to leave public schools to attend private schools (Kava, 2013). Furthermore, privately funded scholarship programs were formed to send public school students to private schools in New York City in 1997, Dayton, Ohio in 1998, and Washington D.C. in 1993. A study of those three private scholarship programs looked for

achievement gains on the Iowa Basic Skills Test. The results showed improvement for African American students that received the scholarships but no statistically significant differences for any of the other students (Howell, Wolf, Peterson, & Campbell, 2000).

The Milwaukee voucher program. Flanders (2017) examined publicly available student 2016 Wisconsin standardized assessment data for Milwaukee public schools and voucher students and found that voucher students strongly outperformed public school students with similar demographics and socioeconomic status. Shear (2017) criticized Flanders and argued against any conclusions of causal effects based on what Shear perceived as Flanders' limited and inadequate school level variables in Flanders' regression models, the omission of the usually strong factor of prior academic achievement, and that only one year of achievement data was used.

With this context, a deeper examination of the history of Milwaukee vouchers and other higher quality studies will be provided for a more complete picture of the United States' first large voucher program. When the program was implemented, even voucher opponents expected voucher students in private schools to outperform their peers in public schools (Ford, 2015). Witte (1998) found "that there were no demonstrable or consistent differences in test scores between choice students and a random sample of MPS students who did not apply for vouchers." Greene, Peterson, and Du (1999) re-analyzed the data and found voucher students gained in mathematics and reading when compared to their peers in traditional public schools. Rouse (1998) also analyzed the data and found voucher students gained in mathematics but not in reading. Three different

conclusions were reached using the same data. School choice opponents and proponents could select the research study that matched their preference.

Some of the differences in these findings were based on methodology and on which students were being compared. Greene et al. (1999) compared the voucher students to the performance of students that applied for a voucher but were not selected for a voucher. Witte pointed out two problems with this approach. One is that the attrition rate of voucher students was about 30% a year, and so the initial cohort of 341 students attending private schools dwindled to 85 students four years later (Witte, 1999, p. 61). The achievement data of the first cohort was based on the performance of only 24.9% of the original cohort four years later. Another problem is that 52% of the students who were not selected for the voucher lottery did not return to the public school system (Witte, 1999, p. 62). Those students likely came from more motivated and affluent families that could find other ways to fund their child's private education. The comparisons of voucher students to students who were not selected was missing the data from the more likely affluent families who were not selected but did not return to public schools.

The Milwaukee voucher program is instructive in how capacity and quality can be measured differently with different results. The 1990's research (Greene et al., 1999; Rouse, 1998; Witte, Sterr, & Thorn, 1995) resulted in conflicting conclusions as to whether there was a meaningful difference in achievement for voucher students. The different results largely come from different research methodologies without yielding a consensus viewpoint (Powers & Cookson, 1999).

Hoxby (2003) examined evidence data on the Milwaukee voucher program and along with data from two other state's charter schools and reached overarching positive conclusions about school choice and competition. Students attending private schools through vouchers outperformed their peers in public schools. She concluded that competition caused by voucher programs helped increase the academic achievement of students in traditional public schools. The study aligned well with Milton Friedman's vision for a marketplace of educational competition and choices that improved the overall quality of private and public schools. Furthermore, the study found no evidence that the achievement gains in private schools were due to attracting students with the highest previous academic achievement. Skimming or creaming the best students was a non-issue.

Hoxby reached overwhelmingly positive conclusions examining voucher studies and data that others had studied previously with remarkably different interpretations. She dismissed previous studies on Chile's voucher program that showed poor results and stratification as meaningless since the studies only included data and comparisons after the voucher program began (Hoxby, 2003, p 24). Hoxby portrayed other studies that examined attempts to introduce competition in New Zealand and Chicago as studies that reached negative conclusions on experiments that really didn't introduce real competition to the education (Hoxby, 2003, p 18).

Hoxby's (2003) new methodology examining Milwaukee's voucher program and charter schools injected the cost of education into the measure of achievement. The cost of vouchers for private schools and the per pupil costs in many charter schools were

much less than the overall cost to educate the same number of students in public schools. Hoxby described student achievement gains divided by cost as productivity. The intermingling of achievement and cost allowed private and charter schools with the same or even lower achievement gains as traditional public school students to be described as more productive (p. 17). Mixing cost and achievement gains into one measurement is problematic in terms of equity because struggling learners and students with disabilities often need more resources and are more expensive to educate (Reschovsky & Imazeki, 1997).

Ladd (2003) criticized Hoxby for selective omissions and for portraying too much of the gains in traditional public schools to being caused by the effects of competition from charter schools or students receiving vouchers. Furthermore, the idea that the invisible hand of competition did not allow skimming of the higher-achieving and higher socio-economic students is countered by theoretical models and evidence from other studies that suggest that Tiebout competition is not naturally immune from skimming concerns (Calsamiglia, Martinez-Mora, & Miralles, 2015; Epple & Romano, 2008; Ladd, 2003; Söderström & Uusitalo, 2010; Urquiola, 2005).

The Milwaukee voucher program was not evaluated again until required by the Wisconsin legislature in 2006 (Ford & Andersson, 2016, 2017). The Milwaukee voucher program had limitations on the numbers of students (1,500 in 1995) but the voucher program jumped to 23,426 in 2012 with much of the significant growth occurring since 1998 when vouchers for religious schools were allowed (Ford & Andersson, 2016, 2017). Comparing voucher student academic achievement with the achievement of similar

public school students from 2006 to 2011 showed no significant differences in the first four years but a slight advantage for voucher students in reading for the fifth year (Witte, Carlson, Cowen, Fleming, & Wolf, 2012). The slight performance gain for voucher students in the 2010-2011 school year may have been influenced more by the confounding factor that the 2010-2011 school year was the first year all voucher students in grades 3-8 and grade 10 were required to take a standardized exam and report the results back to the public and the state of Wisconsin (Ford & Anderson, 2017; Witte et al., 2012; Wolf, 2012). The overall evidence for a large and the United States' oldest voucher program shows similar performance between voucher schools and traditional public schools.

Evidence of U.S. voucher effectiveness. Similar to the different conclusions of Milwaukee's voucher program in the 1990s, New York City's voucher program from 1997 to 2000 has had multiple studies with different strategies of analysis. Barnard, Frangakis, Hill, and Rubin (2003) examined New York City student achievement data with a new model that tried to mitigate the effects of missing data and the high rates of voucher lottery winners choosing not to attend a private school. Barnard et al. (2003) found that voucher and public school students had similar performance but that African American students from lower-performing public schools had a statistically significant benefit in mathematics from attending a private school with vouchers. Krueger and Zhu (2004) concluded that the statistical significance for African American students disappeared when students with missing baseline data were included or depending on how race and ethnicity were defined. The sample population had increased 44% by

including all the kindergarten students and 11% of the students in grade 1 through 4 that had missing baseline data (Krueger & Zhu, 2004). Jin, Barnard, & Rubin (2010) reexamined the same New York City achievement data with a new model that accounted for missing data and voucher lottery winners not attending private schools. Jin et al. (2010) found that voucher students from low performing public schools benefited in mathematics and outperformed their public school peers. Jin et al. (2010) showed stronger voucher performance than Barnard et al. (2003) for grade 4 students in reading and grade 1 students that came from high performing public schools. Both studies fell short of the level of statistical significance in determining a difference in voucher and public school performance in reading.

Howell & Peterson (2006) compared three years of student achievement data (1997 to 2000) for voucher students and a control group of public school students in New York City, Washington DC, and Dayton, Ohio. Voucher students did not outperform the public school control group. At levels of statistical significance, African American students performed better than public school students in New York City all three years and in all three cities during year 2 of the study (Howell & Peterson, 2006, p. 146). African American voucher students underperformed public school students in Washington DC in year 3 but not at a level of statistical significance. Howell & Peterson (2006) note the challenges of subgroup analysis at grade levels with relatively small sample sizes and where roughly one half of the voucher lottery winners did not choose to attend a private school (p. 235).

Bitler, Domina, Penner, and Hoynes, H. (2015) also examined the same New York City 1997 to 2000 student achievement data and concluded that voucher students and public school students had similar achievement and that vouchers did not have a positive or negative impact in a subject (mathematics or reading) or at any specific grade level. The 1997 to 2000 New York City student achievement data is an example of where different study models and designs have yielded a variation in conclusions on overall effectiveness.

Cowen (2008) examined one year of Charlotte, North Carolina student achievement data and found voucher lottery winners outperformed lottery losers. However, the positive effects in mathematics decreased to the point of losing statistical significance when Cowen (2008) analyzed students that followed through on winning a voucher lottery and actually attending a private school.

Evidence on voucher-like tax credits and scholarships. Waslander et al. (2010) described the environment and the effects of Tiebout competition as “ongoing heated debates and the repeated small-to-non-existent effects found by researchers” (p. 7). Older voucher research often focused on smaller studies of voucher programs in their initial limited years. Belfield and Levin (2002) examined 41 empirical studies on Tiebout competition through vouchers and found that competition did improve the quality of schools but the effects were modest. More than half of the approximations of the effect of competition on the quality of education were found to be not statistically significant (p. 294). Rouse and Barrow (2009) noted that Friedman’s plan for competition in education has never been fully implemented and that small voucher programs can’t really test

Friedman's idea in meaningful ways. The narrative of small voucher programs changed as several states expanded voucher programs through scholarships and tax incentives.

In the United States, Tiebout competition has been promoted by increasing access to private schools by the subsidizing of private school tuition through vouchers, but many states have barriers to funding vouchers. The Blaine amendment, which forbids the use of public monies to be spent on religious institutions, was considered and narrowly defeated to be included in the United States Constitution but is included in several state constitutions (Bolick, 2017). Several states crafted successful voucher-like legislation that bypasses the Blaine amendment by creating individual tax credits or deductions for private school tuition or providing tax credits for those that donate to organizations that provide scholarships for private schools (EdChoice, formerly The Milton Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, 2016). Programs vary in terms as to whether payments are available to all students or only economically disadvantaged students.

Washington DC's Opportunity Scholarship Program is indistinguishable from vouchers since a Congressional appropriation funds public school students to attend private and religious schools (Wolf et al., 2013). Wolf et al. (2013) compared lottery winners and lottery losers for the scholarships and found the scholarships had no effect on mathematical achievement and a slight effect on reading achievement but not at a level of statistical significance.

Figlio (2014) found Florida's tax credit scholarship program for school year 2012-2013 resulted in the average student using the scholarship to attend private schools performed at the 45th percentile in reading and the 47th percentile in mathematics with

statistically insignificant changes of 0.1 percentile in reading and a loss of 0.7 percentile in mathematics (p. 2). Although students performed below the average for a nationally norm-referenced test, students in general had been low performing students coming from low performing public schools. A direct comparison of how the program's private school students would have fared in public schools could not be made since public school students and private school students do not take the same assessments. In Florida, public students took the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) 2.0 assessment and private school students did not take a uniform test. More than half of the private students took the Stanford Achievement Test and about a quarter of the students took the Iowa Basic Skills test with the remainder taking other norm referenced tests (Figlio, 2014). The main meaningful conclusion that could be made was that overall Florida's private school scholarships students demonstrated about a year's worth of learning compared to the national average on multiple norm referenced assessments (Figlio, 2014).

The Florida scholarship program demonstrated similar performance to the national average while Washington DC's scholarship program demonstrated similar performance to public school students. While funding programs for disadvantaged students to attend private schools had the expectation that participating students would perform better than staying in their public schools, there wasn't evidence of higher rates of academic achievement by students in voucher-like programs.

Indiana's Choice and Scholarship program acts as a voucher program for low income and modest income Indiana families to send more than 34,000 Indiana students to private and religious schools (Waddington & Berends, 2018). The students served are

predominantly white and less than half have ever attended an Indiana public school (Indiana Department of Education Office of School Finance, 2019). Waddington and Berends (2018) examined 2011 to 2015 student achievement data found statistically significant that voucher participants learned 0.1 standard deviations less in mathematics each year than their public school counterparts. While there were not any statistically significant differences in English language arts (ELA), voucher ELA special education students lost 0.13 standard deviations when compared to their public school special education counterparts (Waddington & Berends, 2018). Waddington and Berends (2018) also found students that left the voucher program and returned to public schools suffered the largest academic performance losses in mathematics and ELA.

Figlio and Karbownik (2016) examined Ohio's EdChoice scholarship program with student achievement data from 2003 to 2013. The study was funded by the Walton Foundation, an organization in favor of and supportive of voucher programs but the study results found voucher students performed significantly worse in mathematics and English language arts than similar public school students and the underperformance did not fade over time (Figlio & Karbownik, 2016, p. 2). Ohio's EdChoice program is one of the nation's largest voucher programs with more than 18,000 students in 2016 and the evidence suggests participants experience academic harm (Figlio & Karbownik, 2016).

Abdulkadiroğlu, Pathak, and Walters (2018) compared lottery winners and losers for Louisiana's scholarship program available for students in low achieving schools to attend private schools just after a significant expansion of the voucher program in 2012-2013. Abdulkadiroğlu et al. (2018) showed academic losses for voucher students in

reading (0.08 standard deviations), mathematics (0.41 standard deviations), social studies (0.33 standard deviations), and science (0.26 standard deviations). The large negative academic losses were not restricted to just a few locations and affected students at lower and higher levels of family income (Abdulkadiroğlu et al., 2018).

Mills and Wolf (2016) examined Louisiana's scholarship performance after two years of the significant voucher expansion (2012-2014) and found a 0.34 standard deviation decrease in mathematics. Mills & Wolf (2016) framed the performance differences by stating, "the magnitude of these negative estimates is unprecedented in the literature of random assignment evaluations of school voucher programs" (p. 4). Mills and Wolf (2017) found after three years of the expansion (2012-2015) that large negative academic losses had faded with similar performance of voucher students and public school students but when grades 1, 2, and 3 were included without baseline tests in the study there was a statistically significant negative effect for vouchers in mathematics (p. 4).

Several of the larger more recent state voucher programs that have scaled up have shown academic harm or no academic benefits to voucher students (Abdulkadiroğlu et al., 2018; Figlio & Karbownik, 2016; Mills & Wolf, 2016, 2017; Waddington & Berends, 2018; Wolf et al., 2013). Despite the lack of evidence for the positive impact of vouchers, vouchers for private and religious schools were still championed by the Trump administration (CBS News, 2016) and other policymakers as a way to increase Tiebout competition and improve the quality of education. The 2017 tax bill that President Trump signed into law included a provision that allowed families to create tax advantaged 529

savings accounts that had previously been restricted for college to be used for attending K-12 private and religious schools (Green, 2017). The provision was inserted into the tax bill by U.S. Senator Cruz and needed Vice President Pence to break a tie vote in the Senate for the change to be included in the law (CSPAN, 2017; Green, 2017). The perspectives of accomplished education leaders are needed to better understand and bring more context to how Tiebout competition affects students, schools, educators, and education leaders.

Equity and Tiebout Competition in Education

The nonexperimental and experimental studies on U.S. charter schools have shown similar performance between public schools and charter schools with a wide variation in quality of performance. Earlier smaller voucher studies showed mixed results and the more recent larger voucher studies have shown no benefit or academic harm to voucher students.

The premise for Tiebout competition to improve education is that parents will select schools based on quality and that schools will have the capacity and motivation to improve by facing competition. Parents often make choices that are influenced by social networks that operate differently depending on the socio-economic status of the families (Waslander et al., 2010). Some schools that face competition invest more in marketing than changing what occurs in the classroom with teaching and learning (Waslander et al., 2010). Many parents make choices based more on the ethnic and socio-economic status of the majority of the children at the school instead of school quality (Musset, 2012). Studies that demonstrated similar performance between traditional schools, charter,

private, or religious schools do not mean that all students are receiving a high quality education since there are strong correlations between poverty and low academic achievement (Meyer, 2013). The theory of Tiebout competition suggests that schools improve if schools are forced to compete for students but Waslander et al. (2010) noted that schools that faced competition often devised ways to attract more desirable students of a higher socio-economic status with higher levels of prior academic achievement. Musset (2012) raised concerns that Tiebout competition in education was not immune from the gravitational pull of increased socio-economic and ethnic segregation.

Milton Friedman's free market solution theoretically addressed segregation and equity concerns (skimming or creaming) when he disrespectfully described struggling learners using the coarse term "the dregs" (Friedman & Friedman, 1980, p. 170).

Friedman stated,

In urban slums where the public schools are doing such a poor job, most parents would undoubtedly try to send their children to nonpublic schools. That would raise transitional difficulties. The parents who are most concerned about their children's welfare are likely to be the first to transfer their children. The possibility exists that some public schools would be left with "the dregs," becoming even poorer in quality than they are now. As the private market took over, the quality of all schooling would rise so much that even the worst, while it might be relatively lower on the scale, would be better in absolute quality.

(Friedman & Friedman, 1980, p. 170)

Friedman understood the issue of skimming and the challenges faced by low performing urban schools, but he failed to adequately describe how the inequities of skimming would lead to higher quality for urban schools beyond the possible magical powers of the invisible hand of Tiebout competition. Schools that have faced Tiebout competition often have demonstrated evidence of skimming or creaming desirable students with a negative impact on equity for disadvantaged families (Bifulco, Ladd, & Ross, 2009; Epple & Romano, 2008; Ladd, 2003; Yang-Hansen & Gustafsson, 2016).

The Obama administration injected Tiebout competition into the Head Start program and providers facing competition improved the quality of their programs which was later adjusted because some aspects of the competition were counterproductive (Derrick-Mills et al., 2016). In a similar manner, the perspectives of highly accomplished education leaders are needed to develop a deeper understanding of how competition affects students and educators in the classroom and how school choice programs need to be adjusted to ensure that segregation does not increase and equity for disadvantaged families occurs.

The Polarization of School Choice and Vouchers in the United States

Chancellor of New York City schools, Joel Klein, championed Tiebout competition and noted “traditional schools, their employees and unions, are screaming bloody murder” (Klein, 2011). Klein (2011) was encouraged by the strong reaction since “it means that the monopolists are beginning to feel the effects of competition.” This polarization of Tiebout competition is in contrast to the collaborative, capacity-building, high-trust school improvement strategies like the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness

Framework.. Expansion of charter schools and providing vouchers for public school students to attend private and/or religious schools has a long history of being a polarized issue with long periods of conflict and low levels of trust between opponents.

The improvement strategies like the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework (Fullan, 2011, p. 5) that focused on increasing capacity, improving quality, and building trust do not always align with strong rhetoric of competition proponents, which frequently describe the public school system as poor or broken (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Lieberman, 2006; Klein, 2011; CBS News, 2016). Chodorov (1959) is an early example of describing public employees as self-interested and selfish individuals collectively acting as an “army of the state” and having “a vested interest in its [own] perpetuation and in the enlargement of its powers” (p. 103). Chodorov (1959) even portrayed firefighting as best served through competition since insurance companies would be motivated to protect themselves from possible profit losses (p. 103). Chodorov judged the motives of all government employees and determined their primary motivation was for increased power (Chodorov, 1959).

Competition proponents did not view the school improvement strategy of increasing capacity, building trust, and improving quality as an alternative or even a dual strategy to establishing education markets of competition. Advocacy for improving education by collaboration and raising standards was labeled the “effective school syndrome” because “America’s existing system of public education inhibits the emergence of effective organizations ... because its institutions of democratic control

function naturally to limit and undermine school autonomy” (Chubb & Moe, 1990, p. 23).

These arguments for adopting a market-based competition strategy for public education often attributed the need to change the current system by describing schools and school systems as failing (Adamson et al., 2016; Chubb & Moe, 1990). Another example of the promotion of competition in ways that erode trust in educators and the current education system can be found in the nationally televised speech of Donald Trump, Jr. at the 2016 Republican National Convention in Cleveland.

The son of President-elect Trump stated,

The other party gave us public schools that far too often fail our students, especially those that have no options. Growing up, my siblings and I, were truly fortunate to have choices and options that others don't have. We want all Americans to have those same opportunities. Our schools used to be an elevator to the middle class, now they're stalled on the ground floor. They're like Soviet-era department stores that are run for the benefit of the clerks, and not the customers, for the teachers and administrators and not the students. You know why other countries do better on K through 12? They let parents choose where to send their own children to school. That's called competition. It's called the free market. And it's what the other party fears. They fear it because they're more concerned about protecting the jobs of tenured teachers than serving the students in desperate need of a good education. They want to run everything top-down from Washington.

They tell us they are the experts and they know what's best. (President Donald Trump News and Live Speech, 2016; CNN, 2016)

President Trump stated in his 100 Day Action Plan that he will redirect “education dollars to give parents the right to send their kid to the public, private, charter, magnet, religious or home school of their choice” (Trump, 2016). Trump’s education speech in Cleveland stated that he planned to redirect \$20 billion in federal monies for school choice through state block grants (CBS News, 2016). His advocacy for the policy change included describing the U.S. public education system as “a government-run education monopoly” set up to protect “a lot of people that have a lot of real high-paying jobs” but are ineffective (CBS News, 2016). He described the current education system as “trapping millions of African-American and Hispanic youth in failing government schools that deny them the opportunity to join the ladder of American success” (CBS News, 2016).

Trump’s plan to promote school choice where parents can use government funding to send their child to public or private schools, or religious schools, is based on the need for Tiebout competition. Trump enthusiastically stated, “Competition. Always does it. The weak fall out and the strong get better. An amazing thing” (CBS News, 2016). The school improvement strategies of building trust, increasing capacity, and improving quality do not necessarily align with the language that educators are a selfish monopoly that needs to be broken apart. In this study, I bring forward the perspectives and insights of nationally recognized education leaders on the benefits and disadvantages

of Tiebout competition and how competition impacts the classroom, schools, and the public education system.

Different views on the optimal competitive market. Advocates for increasing competition in public education fall into three distinct groupings: those that desire the efficiencies of competitive open markets, those that champion parental rights and freedom, and those that see the ability to bring better access to higher quality schools to students that are disadvantaged (Musset, 2012, p. 6). Among the early advocates for competition in public education (Currie-Knight, 2014), disagreements on how to design and implement the market-based competitive education market were common. Depending on the competition proponent's perspective, an experiment with competition could be viewed as bringing real competition to U.S. education or as a tepid imitation of competitive markets that is bound to fail. The economist Rothbard compared government-run schools to the government controlling all magazines and newspapers (Rothbard, 2006 /1973, p. 157). He was a strong advocate that markets should replace all governmental roles in society, including education, with no governmental oversight or involvement (Currie-Knight, 2014; Rothbard, 2006 / 1973). Others saw a strong role for government in terms of providing subsidies and ensuring that schools met some standard of quality (Currie-Knight, 2014). Equity-focused advocates supported experiments for voucher subsidies that only subsidized students in poverty to address equity (Lieberman, 2006). Lieberman viewed such experiments as poor substitutes for real competition and that for-profit companies providing and administering schools as a school system were necessary to ensure market-based competition (Lieberman, 2006, p. 98). There was never

a unified vision for the design of infusing competition into public education. Even within the pro Tiebout competition community, there has not been uniform agreement as to which experiments in education are truly bringing competition to public education.

Conflict in forming schools of choice. The logistics of forming charter schools from the current population of students attending traditional public school students has often been controversial, contentious, and filled with conflict (Adamson et al., 2016; Musset, 2012; Teske & Schneider, 2001). The *Race to the Top* restart option meant closing a school and reopening the school as one or several new charters. Closing and opening schools created many interruptions and changes for students, parents, and staff. Some of the gains in the CREDO charter school studies from 2009 to 2013 were due to the closing of low performing charter schools (CREDO, 2013a).

About half of the states have introduced legislation that would allow a majority of the parents at a low performing school to change leadership and the organization of the school (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013). California, Indiana, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas have enacted parent trigger legislation into law (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013). Parent votes that change leadership and governance are high stakes as employment and control are being determined. The rhetoric of school choice organizations often portrays charter opponents as undeserving, monopolistic, and comfortable with mediocrity (Smith & Rowland, 2014, p. 103). Teachers unions and competition opponents often portray competition proponents as corporations trying to profit from students by privatizing public education (Stitzlein, 2015).

Changing leadership and school governance can often bring initial challenges that increase dissatisfaction. Schools that can change management by a parent majority vote are susceptible to cycling through numerous chaotic leadership experiences since the parent population changes substantially each year (Kelly, 2012). A vote for change can sow the seeds to revote to undo the last vote. A campaign to foster dissatisfaction with the staff and current education offerings of a school in order to vote for new management is unlikely to align with the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework that emphasizes building trust, increasing capacity, and improving the quality of education.

Comparisons to religious wars demonstrates depth of conflict. The ideological disagreement on Tiebout competition in education has been compared to religious wars that pit the value of public education against faith in the markets (Teske & Schneider, 2001, p. 609). Belfield and Levin (2005) described the ideological battle on competition in education as between those that believe in the libertarian value of supremacy of free choice and those that believe in the power of the social contract to provide high quality public education for all students.

The components of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework are dependent on having a learning community with a strong social contract committed to building trust, capacity, and quality. Tiebout competition's origins for public education are from two economists, Tiebout and Friedman. It may not be surprising that a collaborative education community would have different views on public education than two economists; however, even economists have had strong disagreements on economic policy.

Economists Keynes and Hayek had radically different views on the appropriate response to when the U.S. economy has an economic collapse (Wapshott, 2011). Keynesian followers championed President Roosevelt's New Deal initiated in the 1930s and President Obama's stimulus package as a way to speed and improve the U.S. economic recovery (Wapshott, 2011). Followers of Hayek prefer free market solutions and were highly critical of both programs (Wapshott, 2011). A body of research and evidence over the decades has not resolved the ideological differences between the two sides.

The ideological differences between advocates and opponents of Tiebout competition in education appear just as long-lasting and ingrained as the economic conflicts between advocates of Keynes and advocates of Hyek. Teachers unions have historically been extremely opposed to student vouchers and any efforts to undermine traditional public schools (Goldstein, 2015). School choice and competition advocates often describe modest evidence for the positive effects of competition or evidence of the negative effects of competition as pseudo-school choice plans that don't truly insert competition into education because programs are restricted to low income students or government still maintains some regulatory oversight (Lieberman, 1993; Hoxby, 2003).

Qualitative studies increase understanding to complex situations. In this study, I examined competition in public education from the perspective of education leaders. The perspectives of economists on competition in public education have been the focal point of the debate about competition in public education. The perspectives of accomplished education leaders have been more peripheral to the debate but can add an

important perspective that adds clarity and coherence to issues that often have multiple interpretations. Jabbar (2015) analyzed the perspectives of New Orleans school principals on how they perceive and responded to competition. Principals in low performing schools and under-subscribed schools perceived the greatest pressure from competition. Some principals engaged in practices to avoid competition. Others sought to increase their competitiveness by skimming the highest achieving students through marketing and selection (p. 15). The discussion as to whether competition increases inequities by creaming or skimming high achieving students is better informed when some principals in low achieving schools stated they have felt the effects of skimming and some principals of high achieving schools admitted that they engaged in skimming (Jabbar, 2015).

The way in which policy is implemented and how it affects the classroom is valuable information that can be learned from the perspectives of accomplished education leaders. These perspectives are crucial to informing and understanding policy effects. The language of competition in public schools often lacks specific examples and context. The assumption is that students and parents will select schools based on quality. Lubienski (2006) showed the perspective of one principal who believed attracting more students to a school could be done by changing the school uniform and increasing funding for advertising and the marketing of the school (p. 2). If parents are selecting schools by marketing campaigns instead of making decisions based on quality, then competition between schools may be based on extraneous factors not related to quality.

Summary and Conclusions

The literature on competition in public education has numerous economic models (Calsamiglia et al., 2015; Epple & Romano, 2012; Epple & Romano, 2014) and analysis of comparing students that receive school vouchers (Zimmer & Engberg, 2016). The evidence on charter schools is mixed and the most recent evidence on vouchers is negative. If schools are going to dramatically increase their capacity, quality, and level of public trust through competition, competition needs to foster improvements in teaching and learning at the classroom level. It is a concern that “there is little evidence of a straightforward causal relation between competitive pressure and changes made in school practices” (Waslander et al., 2010, p. 68). There is a gap in the literature due to the sparse examination of the perspectives of accomplished education leaders. The effects of Tiebout education were improved in the Head Start program after policymakers received feedback and were able to understand the perspectives of the Head Start providers (Derrick-Mills et al., 2016). The perspectives of accomplished education leaders can also inform and allow for education policies and strategies to be improved or abandoned. In this study, I gathered perspectives from education leaders on the specific ways that competition impacts student learning to add clarity on how competition impacts public education.

The evidence on competition improving public education is mixed, modest, and controversial. Some viewed competition as the lever to improve public education. Others viewed Tiebout competition delivering modest or insignificant. A deeper understanding of the complexities and nuances of how competition impacts the quality of public

education is needed. Other practitioners and researchers may find that this study helps uncover the interactions and the impact of competition in public education.

I provided in Chapter 2 an overview for the search strategies used to examine the literature related to Tiebout competition in education along with further descriptions of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. I explained the mixed and sometimes conflicting results in studies on the effectiveness of charter schools including both nonexperimental studies and experimental studies. I also provided a summary of the literature on vouchers and voucher-like programs and their effectiveness along with an explanation for why Tiebout competition through charter schools and voucher programs is a polarized issue in the United States.

In Chapter 3, I explain the research design and my rationale for why the design is best suited for collecting deep perspectives from highly accomplished education leaders on how Tiebout competition affects schools and students. I also describe my role as the researcher and how I ensure that my experience as an educator does not introduce bias into the study. I detail the methodology, my plans for participant recruitment, plans for data analysis and how I manage issues of trustworthiness.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In this qualitative social constructionist study, I examined the effects of competition on the quality of public education from the perspectives of accomplished education leaders from members of NNSTOY and fellows of Aspen Pajara. Their perspectives and personal experiences improving quality, increasing trust, and building capacity were coded to the Ontario K-12 effective school framework, and those experiences were then checked for interactions with Tiebout competition. In this chapter, I provide a description of the rationale for the research design, the role of the researcher, the study's methodology, and how ethical concerns were addressed.

Selection of Research Design

The central research question is as follows: When examining education leaders' perspectives, stories, examples, and descriptions of competition through the lens of Ontario's K-12 school effectiveness framework, in what ways does competition affect public education in terms of quality, capacity, and trust?

I could have examined how competition impacts trust, capacity, and quality within public schools from a qualitative or quantitative methodology. However, many of the quantitative studies conducted have shown negligible or modest positive or negative effects for Tiebout competition (CREDO, 2009, 2013, 2015; Ford, 2015; Musset, 2012; Teske et al., 2000). Ford (2016) examined perceptions of accountability, one aspect of competition, from a qualitative perspective using interviews with principals that probed how schools compete for high-achieving students. I did not find any examples of studies

that examined competition through the lens of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework or other school effectiveness models. I chose the Ontario framework as the conceptual framework because the framework was created with a high degree of collaboration and trust to successfully increase the academic achievement of students in Ontario, Canada (Rincon-Gallardo & Fullan, 2016; OME, 2013). I selected a phenomenological social constructionist approach to examine the impact of the phenomena of competition on capacity, trust, and quality in public education.

I could have chosen an alternative approach such as conducting a quantitative study with a survey of education leaders on how competition impacts trust, capacity, and quality. However, a quantitative survey would not easily ascertain the participants' specific understanding of competition and would not gather the examples and stories that the accomplished education leaders have experienced. Embedding the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework within a quantitative survey also would bring in confounding factors since there would not be a straightforward way to clarify or discuss the Ontario framework in a quantitative approach. Even if I could gather data through a survey from all U.S. education leaders of their perceptions on whether competition improved public education, the information might still not further or advance a deeper understanding of how competition impacts public education. The results would likely show what is already known: school choice/competition is a polarized issue with advocates and opponents on both sides of the issue without a clear consensus as to a positive or negative impact on overall school quality.

Alternative qualitative approaches that were considered included case study, multiple case study, and ethnography. The case study methodology uses a qualitative approach to probe how and why certain things happen (Yin, 2014). How competition affects the quality of public education is a compelling question that needs deeper insight and perspective. My study included plans to initially interview eight to 10 different U.S. education leaders before I ultimately decided on a sample size of 15. By design and selection criteria, the education leaders worked in different school districts in several different geographical regions. The study also included accomplished education leaders working in different capacities. With these design and selection criteria, this study would not be possible to treat as a single case study.

A multiple case study approach was also considered. The approach includes examining a phenomenon from multiple cases that build upon each other by providing examples of how context can affect the phenomenon and can elicit common themes and findings from across the multiple cases (Stake, 2013). Conducting multiple case studies commonly involves interviewing individuals and examining appropriate documents across several different geographical sites. A multiple case study approach often requires a larger staff, substantial funding, and more time when compared to other research methodologies. Stake (2013) described a multiple case study that addressed the effects of an educational program in several different countries. The project employed teams of interviewers and researchers to complete the projects. I did not have the capacity in terms of money or time to conduct 15 different case studies across several different geographical locations.

I also considered an ethnographic approach. Ethnography involves immersion into a culture to observe and reflect on the phenomenon from the perspectives of others within the culture. Observing other education leaders in their own environment to gain knowledge on the phenomenon of competition in education raised questions as to how competition can be physically observed. The competition effects would be difficult to disentangle from other district or school-wide initiatives to improve public education. Quantitative researchers examining school assessment data find it challenging to disentangle the effects of competition from other education initiatives (Figlio & Rouse, 2006, 2014). A modest achievement improvement in some Florida schools may have been caused by competition from other charter schools or the simultaneous policy of publicly grading schools from A to F based on their achievement data (Figlio & Rouse, 2006). I did not find any Florida studies in this same time frame that considered teaching and school improvement strategies aligned with the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework or other school effectiveness models. If I immersed myself in the culture observing education leaders, I am not confident that I could easily determine which outcomes and behaviors were motivated by competition.

I selected a phenomenological study of competition with a social constructionist approach. Social constructionism approaches a topic through the lens of relationships and communities (Gergen, 2015). The Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework and other school effectiveness models that have been used to improve public education and schools also seek to improve quality through strengthening learning communities by increasing capacity and trust (Childress et al., 2011; OME, 2013; National Education

Association, 2015; Singapore Ministry of Education, 2012). Through the lens of the Ontario School Effectiveness Framework, I examined the dynamics of competition on public education in terms of quality, capacity, and trust from the perspective of accomplished education leaders. Social constructionism, as a methodology, provided a possible pathway to break through polarized conflicts with generative insights. Social constructionism is a methodology that “describes and explains in a way that challenges the taken-for-granted conventions of understanding, and simultaneously invites us into new worlds of meaning and action” (Gergen, 2015, p. 92). While the application of competition in public education through the theories of Friedman, Tiebout, and Smith is controversial, the methodology of social constructionism is a pathway to examine a topic with fresh eyes in a way that replaced isolation with connectedness and antagonism with collegial fellowship (Gergen, 2015).

A social constructionism methodology strives to make sense “of our shared, social lives” (Shotter & Lannamann, 2002) in ways that are willing to question past theory and practice. Social constructionism does not assume that competition is a natural aspect of human nature but a socially constructed view subscribed to by those who believe in a specific economic structure (Burr, 2015, p. 34). Social constructionism is also a critical voice of aspects of competition that are corrosive to relationships. Gergen (2015) compared competition that is only focused on individual success at the expense of others with other negative traits that diminish relationships such as selfishness, narcissism, and distrust. In social constructionism, the relationships are the foundation for negotiating meaning and understanding within communities.

Through the lens of social constructionism, competition in and of itself is a social construct. Through the analysis of interviews with 15 accomplished education leaders, I used in-depth interviews to explore the various dynamics of competition in public education.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

Since there is little qualitative research addressing competition in public education from the context of a school effectiveness framework such as the Ontario framework, I selected education leaders from a broad group of highly accomplished educators. The education leaders were selected through a purposeful sampling process. My plan was to select education leaders from the charter community as well as from the traditional public school community. The sampling strategy was a purposeful criterion sampling that selected exemplary education leaders.

A key component of the selection process was that the participants were highly respected and recognized for their leadership and expertise. I recruited participants from two prestigious and selective processes: members of NNSTOY and recipients of Aspen Pahara fellowships. Selected members of NNSTOY have gone through a rigorous selection and interview process to be the Teacher of the Year for their state. Aspen Pahara selects accomplished and highly recommended education leaders for four multiday seminars that includes completing a project over a 2-year time frame. The Aspen-Pahara fellows and NNSTOY members included leaders from both the charter school choice community and those with from traditional schools or ties to unions. I

recruited education leaders who worked extensively in the charter school community along with leaders with extensive experience in traditional schools. I provide further description in this chapter in an upcoming section on my role as a researcher.

The study had an initial planned sample size of eight to 10 participants with an initial quota of four to five participants from the charter community and an equivalent number of participants from the traditional public school community. I worked to maximize the effectiveness of using social constructionism by being determined to gather interviews from accomplished education leaders that had a richness and depth and allowed me as a researcher to describe and discover the social constructions. Three leading textbooks on social constructionism do not mention sample size (Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2015; Jun, 2012). Saturation is described only as the saturation of values that are discovered in quality interviews (Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2015). Patton (2015) also described qualitative research with a focus on quality and less of an emphasis on quantity.

Mason (2010) analyzed qualitative PhD dissertations and found a range in sample size for qualitative phenomenology dissertations from seven to 89. However, of the 57 phenomenology dissertations discovered, only 25 were included in his study because he eliminated dissertations where the sample size was just one or two participants or the sample size was not explicitly stated in the dissertation abstract (Mason, 2010). It is significant that more than half of the qualitative phenomenology dissertations were excluded by this criterion.

Creswell (2007) suggest phenomenology studies to have a sample size from 5 to 25. Luborsky and Rubinstein (1995) described a qualitative rule of thumb from 12 to 26

while also noting that sample sizes below 10 were also common. Snyder (2016) studied the roles of hybrid teachers through in depth interviews with a sample size of 8. I initially selected a sample size from eight to 10 as within the range of many phenomenological studies and my capacity to focus on richness and depth of qualitative data. An initial sample size of eight to 10 did not guarantee saturation but gave me the flexibility to gather qualitative data from 8 participants and then decide whether to increase my sample size by 25% if needed. I realized if multiple in-depth interviews from highly accomplished education leaders began to develop redundancy, then I may be reaching a point of saturation.

Although social constructionism does not guarantee saturation, I was comfortable gathering the perspectives of eight to 10 exemplary education leaders from traditional public schools and the charter school community would bring a fresh perspective on competition in public education. During the study, I increased the sample size to 15. The methodology of social constructionism provided new ways to understand concepts that are often mired in conflict and disagreement.

Participants were eligible to be selected by being a member of NNSTOY or by being an Aspen Pahara Fellow. I identified the pool of eligible participants through the NNSTOY and Pahara websites along with the publicly available database of State Teachers of the Year on the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) website. I contacted and recruited participants by phone or email as described in the IRB approved consent form.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher in this study was as an observer. I selected participants from the two highly selective organizations of NNSTOY and the Aspen Pahara Fellows. I am a member of both communities from which the study's participants were selected.

I worked for more than 25 years as a public school teacher in Alaska. I was selected as the Alaska 2009 Teacher of the Year and was on the Board of Directors of NNSTOY during the duration of this study. My role with NNSTOY focused on working collaboratively with other Board members as a team to oversee the organization, evaluate the president of NNSTOY, and assisted in strategy and execution of the mission and vision of NNSTOY. The mission of NNSTOY was to “support policies and practices that advance teacher leadership, educator effectiveness, and the conditions, capacity, and culture necessary to support great teaching and learning for all students” (NNSTOY, 2016). I did not supervise other NNSTOY members. The President of NNSTOY was not included as a possible participant because as a Board member, I was engaged in the evaluation of the President.

I was also selected as one of twenty Aspen-Pahara Fellows in 2012 and am a member of the Aspen-Pahara community. I was also the Director of the Division of Educator and School Excellence for the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development during the time of this study. Employees within my Division that I supervised and led were not included as possible participants within the study. Since I was a member of two nationally recognized organizations for teacher and education leaders and was also an educational leader at the state level, those connections can help

attract participants that would normally not make time to participate in a study. The pool of participants that I am considering did not include anyone that I supervise or have direct authority over.

I was also a member of the National Education Association as a teacher and a contributing member of the National Education Association Accountability Task Force which developed the 2015 Accountability Task Force report. In February 2017 through December 2018, I worked for the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development in a role which was not represented by unions.

I did not offer any financial incentives to participants in the study beyond a personal thank you. Although I did not have any direct authority or supervision responsibilities over any participants, it was possible that perceptions of influence could exist. At each stage of the study that I interacted with participants, I orally and in written form stressed the voluntary nature of the study, my role as a researcher, and the participant's ability to withdraw from the study at any time.

Instrumentation

Semi-structured interviews using the *Educational Leader Interview Guide* (Appendix B) were the primary instrument for gathering qualitative data from the participants. I developed the protocol around the focus of gathering examples and stories from education leaders on the research question. Researcher-developed protocols helped me as a researcher to be conversational and spontaneous in a way that maximized the use of limited interview time and that ensured that the key topics are focused upon in all interviews (Patton, 2015). I used the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework

(Appendix A) as the conceptual framework that helped create more focused and descriptive interviews about trust, capacity, quality, and competition. The framework was developed by the Ontario Ministry of Education as a mechanism to improve and strengthen Ontario's education system (OME, 2013).

The perceptions and thoughts of accomplished education leaders about competition in public education would be difficult to physically observe. The semi-structured interview was a good instrument to gather detailed information on that which cannot be collected through passive observation. Interviews with accomplished education leaders allowed me, as the researcher, to gather examples, perceptions, and stories that comprised each participant's socially constructed understanding of the dynamics of competition in public education in terms of a widely respected effectiveness model.

In this phenomenological study, I used the *Education Leader Interview Guide* (Appendix B) as a semi-structured interview instrument to gather perspectives from education leaders to see if common themes arise around competition. I sought to find a shared perspective around a social constructionist framework through the guide that gathered examples, stories, and beliefs around competition through the lens of the conceptual framework. The validity of the instrument was also dependent on my ability as a researcher to gather high quality and sufficient qualitative data from the interviews (Patton, 2015). Preliminary coding focused on several components of the conceptual framework and will be outlined in further detail in an upcoming section.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I contacted selected participants that met the criteria for being an accomplished education leader by phone, email, or in person. I explained that the study is about collecting the stories and perspectives of accomplished education leaders on the interactions and dynamics of trust, capacity, quality, and competition in public education. If interested, I explained the various aspects of the consent form and emailed or handed the form to the participant. Each participant physically signed in-person, signed and scanned the document, or electronically signed the document. An email response that affirms consent was interpreted as an electronic signature. I emailed each participant a copy of the consent form that the we both signed.

The video conferences or face-to-face interviews were conducted in ways that best fit each participant's schedule. Two recordings were made of each interview to guard against recording failure on one instrument and to provide an additional source if more clarity was needed to confirm a phrase or statement in an interview. The geographical diversity of the sample led to most interviews being conducted through Zoom video conference software. The audio of each session was recorded using an audio recorder.

Depending on the participant's preference, the interviews took place during the participant's work or personal time. The dependability of internet access and bandwidth were confirmed before scheduling each video conference. Audio conferencing or phone service was available as a backup if there was a video-conferencing failure.

I physically delivered or emailed an Informed Consent Form that had been signed by the participant and me to each participant. Each in-depth interview was scheduled for

90 minutes with agreement for a willingness for a brief follow-up phone call to have the opportunity to add to the interview or clarify any thoughts or statements if necessary. I transcribed each interview. Initially, I planned to complete data collection when I completed eight to 10 interviews along with any of the optional follow-up interviews.

If prospective participants were unable to participate in the study for any reason or decided to withdraw from the study, I planned to recruit additional accomplished education leaders to participate in the study. I was confident that the interview protocol, Ontario framework, and the video-conference recordings would be sufficient to gather the qualitative data necessary to conduct this study.

Participant requirements to be included in the study were to: meet the criteria as an accomplished educational leader (members of NNSTOY or fellows of Aspen Pahara), sign the consent form, be interviewed for up to 90 minutes, be available for a 30 minute follow-up call if needed, and receive a transcript of their interview for their review with an opportunity to provide corrections or clarifications.

Data Analysis Plan

This study used a social constructionist approach with the recordings of interviews with accomplished education leaders as the data source for describing and defining the dynamics of Tiebout competition in public education. I used a modified Bernauer's (2015) three phase process for connecting the data from the interviews to the research question. I transcribed each interview and brought the text and audio into NVivo software; however, I applied Bernauer's phase one method of listening and deeply reflecting on the interviews, listening for tone, inflection, and emphasis. I then applied

the second phase of Bernauer's method by writing my reflections, thoughts and interpretations of each interview (Bernauer, 2015). The second phase partitioned the recordings and my interpretations of possible themes. If I had followed Bernauer's standard three-phase method, I would have only used the interview recordings and my researcher reflections as the basis to write the final study. I modified Bernauer's standard method. I also used NVivo software to more deeply explore and generate and refine additional codes and themes.

One shortcoming of using software in qualitative studies is that the details and procedures for using the software can become confused with the methodology of the study (Kikooma, 2010). I did not use the NVivo software as my methodology but as a tool to help interpret the data and find the social constructions that accomplished education leaders have used to explain the dynamics of competition in public education. The Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework was used as a third point of reference within the interviews and the coding of the qualitative data. By using a modified Bernauer coding strategy, I avoided confusing software techniques with a qualitative methodology.

I began the study knowing that the stories, examples, and perspectives may fall into categories that could be coded to different components of the education improvement model and to positive and negative changes in trust, capacity, and quality. Education leaders from charter school networks may experience certain types of competition where they can attract more students to increase their school's capacity, trust, and quality within the community. Education leaders from traditional public schools that lose students and

funding to competition with charter schools may have stories and examples of diminished capacity, quality, and trust. As I planned for data analysis, I was very open to the possibility that themes and examples may emerge where traditional and charter schools experienced some similar examples of healthy competition and unhealthy competition. I was also aware some themes and examples from the charter and traditional school communities may be unique and different.

Since the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework was used as a reference point throughout the interviews, several codes were likely to be centered around topics within the framework. Likely codes include collaboration, assessment, curriculum, student learning, teaching, student well-being, student behavior, instructional leadership, learning environment, inclusiveness, student inquiry, student success, partnerships, personalization, precision, accountability, systems thinking, and evidence-based direction. Furthermore, the research question had a focus which will likely include additional codes for trust, capacity, quality, and competition.

Initially, I thought eight to 10 interviews with accomplished education leaders would gather enough narratives, examples, and perceptions on the dynamics of Tiebout competition in public education. Within my plans, I planned to actively search for discrepant cases in order to avoid confirmation bias. From the perspective of social constructionism, the possibility of different and conflicting stories and examples are just different ways education leaders socially constructed their understanding of Tiebout competition. Since the education leaders' perceptions were shared within the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework, there was a possibility that apparent conflicting

perceptions and stories may not actually be in conflict if perceptions and stories affected different portions of the framework. For example, I thought there may be examples of an education policy that was meant to spur competition for schools to improve that motivated some education leaders to improve but would be perceived by other education leaders as decreasing trust, capacity, and quality. This study's methodology allowed a closer examination of how the intended Tiebout competition policies desired by some policymakers actually plays out in schools and classrooms from the perspectives of accomplished education leaders.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

As a qualitative researcher, I conducted myself both formally and informally in ways that demonstrated that the research is credible. Credibility is based on producing high quality data that includes a reflective process to guard against credibility issues and that is true to the values and spirit of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002). Prolonged engagement is one strategy I used to increase credibility (Houghton, Casey, Shaw, & Murphy, 2013). Each interview was allotted and reserved for 90 minutes to ensure sufficient time was available to gather the perceptions of accomplished education leaders. Participants also agreed to an optional 30-minute follow-up interview if needed to confirm or clarify any aspects of the interview. I also reflected on interviews through deep listening memos throughout the fieldwork to ensure the research includes built-in time to reflect on issues of credibility.

Although the interviews were self-reported data, the credibility of the participants was high because the education leaders had been vetted and recognized for their accomplishments by their membership in NNSTOY or the Aspen-Pahara Fellowship.

The methodology of social constructionism does not guarantee that every time a small sample size of diverse accomplished education leaders are interviewed that the same narratives and perspectives will be discovered about the dynamics of competition on the quality of public education. My plans were to look at data saturation during the study before making the decision as to whether the sample size should be increased. Social constructionism offered the opportunity of discovering perceptions and narratives that brought about new understandings of the polarizing phenomena of Tiebout competition in public education.

Transferability

The transferability of research suggests the degree to which research findings can be applied to other settings and circumstances (Houghton et al., 2013). Thick description is a strategy to provide detailed context for the data to let the reader determine the overall transferability of the research. The participants were selected from several different geographical areas and various levels of education leadership. The themes that emerged may imply transferability or the reader may determine that certain perceptions from one of the participants does transfer well to a similar area or setting. The ability to recruit education leaders that have been nationally recognized may result in outcomes that will have more transferability due to the quality and caliber of the participants and their experiences.

Dependability

In qualitative research, dependability ascertains the degree to which the conclusions and results of the study are realistic and convincing based on the data that has been gathered and analyzed (Patton, 2002). All the data was archived in NVivo so that an external auditor could examine all of the data and retrace the analysis and decision-making processes.

Confirmability

My reflections and all my data are archived in the NVivo software. The data, results, and my methodological decisions can, if needed, be corroborated by other researchers.

Ethical Procedures

All prospective participants agreed to either opt out of the study or participate in the study by showing interest in the study or declining to participate in the study. Participants signed the consent form in-person, signed and scanned the form, or electronically signed the consent through email. As the researcher, I did not identify participants by name in the study. I ensured that the confidentiality of each participant in this study remained secure. Subsequent uses of records and data are subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of participants. IRB proposal approval was obtained before any participant interviews were conducted or any participants were formally contacted. Participants were selected from publicly available websites that list State Teachers of the Year and Aspen-Pahara Fellows. I contacted prospective participants by phone or email as described in the IRB approved consent form.

One ethical concern was that accomplished education leaders are contacted frequently to participate in research. I was initially concerned that prospective participants may feel pressure to participate because I am a member of their network of education leaders. The main way I alleviated those concerns was by having participants read and sign the informed consent form in advance of the interview and by orally confirming with participants the voluntary nature and their ability to withdraw from the study at the beginning of each interview. I also confirmed that participants can withdraw from the study at any time up to the completion of the study for any reason.

Data collection was conducted through the interview process. Interview times were confirmed with both my time zone and the participant's time zone to be sure to respect each participant's time. I planned to address any missed interviews or any technical issues by rescheduling the interview and by checking once again whether the participant would like to withdraw from the study. I was prepared for any participants that decided to withdraw and would have deleted their data and not included their collected data in the study.

Data collected was confidential in that the names of participants will not be revealed in the study. The personal information and interview data collected on participants was password protected and accessed only by my dissertation committee and me.

Ethical concerns about power differentials or conflicts of interest were minimized. During this study, I was an active member of NNSTOY and serve on NNSTOY's Board. I did not consider members of NNSTOY staff as prospective participants. I did not have

any supervisory or administrative role over any participants in the study. I clearly communicated to prospective participants that I was seeking participants only in my role as a Walden doctoral student. Walden University's IRB approval number for this study is 04-11-18-0195166.

Summary

I explained in Chapter 3 why I selected a phenomenological social constructionist approach to study Tiebout competition after considering several other alternative approaches. I shared why I am selecting a purposeful criterion sample to gather the perspectives of accomplished and respected education leaders. I also described how I selected accomplished education leaders for the study along with the instrumentation of a structured interview to effectively gather perspectives. I explained how I modified Bernauer's three phase listening technique to include use of NVivo software to assist in data analysis. I also shared factors that increase the likelihood that my work will be transferable to other settings and explained how I prepared to address any ethical concerns while conducting the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Tiebout competition has been a key strategy for improving U.S. public education in both the Obama and Trump administrations (CBS News, 2016; USDoED, 2010, 2017). The purpose of this social constructionist qualitative study was to examine the perspectives of accomplished U.S. education leaders on the interactions between Tiebout competition and quality, trust, and capacity through the lens of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework. The primary research question for this study was the following: When examining education leaders' perspectives, stories, examples, and descriptions of competition through the lens of Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework, in what ways does competition affect public education in terms of quality, capacity, and trust?

I interviewed 15 accomplished education leaders using a semistructured interview format and then analyzed the interviews using a modified Bernauer's (2015) three phase process for connecting the data from the interviews to the research question. The theoretical framework of Tiebout competition and the components of the conceptual framework, the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework, were used to delve deeper into the perspectives of accomplished education leaders on Tiebout competition.

In this chapter, I present the setting, demographics, and the processes of data collection and analysis of the study. I then describe the evidence of trustworthiness and the results of the study.

Setting

Through publicly available information, I invited accomplished education leaders who had completed 2-year fellowships with Aspen Pajara or who were members of NNSTOY. I sent prospective participants who had responded positively to an email invitation a formal agreement to participate in the study with the IRB approved consent form. I conducted 15 semistructured interviews of accomplished education leaders from May 18, 2018 to July 20, 2018 using the IRB approved Educational Leader Interview Guide (Appendix B). Fourteen interviews were virtually conducted through video conferencing using the Zoom platform. One interview was conducted face-to-face and for consistency was also recorded using the Zoom video-conferencing software. All 15 interviews included having a back-up audio recording device.

Demographics

Of the 15 study participants, 86.7% (13) were White, and 13.3% (2) were African American. The gender of the participants was 46.7% (7) female and 53.3% (8) male. All of the participants were actively working in education. Forty percent (6) of the participants were accomplished education leaders teaching in the classroom with additional leadership responsibilities, and 60% (9) of the participants were accomplished education leaders working as leaders within charter school networks, teacher unions, school districts, consulting agencies, or education nonprofits. Forty percent (6 of the 15) participants had experience and a background in charter schools or the school choice community.

Of the 15 participants, 40% (6) had education leadership experience in more than one education setting. Participants had leadership experience in rural, suburban, and urban communities at rates of 33.3% (5), 53.3% (8), and 73.3% (11) respectively. Sixty percent (9) of the participants had leadership experience working with high percentages of economically disadvantaged students. Table 2 shows the age ranges of the 15 participants.

Table 2

Participant Number and Percentage by Age Range

Age range of participants	Number	Percent
25-35 years old	3	20.0%
36-45 years old	3	20.0%
46-55 years old	6	40.0%
56-65 years old	2	13.3%
Older than 65 years old	1	6.7%

At the time of the interview, the 15 participants lived in 14 different states or the District of Columbia with education leadership experience in 21 states. The geographical diversity of the participants and their leadership experiences are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Percentage and Number of Participants by Geographic Region

Geographic region	Current location	Location of leadership experiences
Northeast United States	13.3% (2)	60.0% (9)
Midwest United States	26.7% (4)	33.3% (5)
South United States	26.7% (4)	53.3% (8)
West	33.3% (5)	66.7% (10)

Data Collection

After prospective participants responded positively to an IRB approved email invitation to consider participating in the study, I emailed each participant the IRB-

approved consent form. All participants either printed, signed, and scanned the form or electronically signed the form before emailing the consent form back to me.

I scheduled and conducted video conferencing interviews for each participant using the IRB approved Educational Leader Interview Guide (Appendix B). Each interview lasted a maximum of 90 minutes. Each interview was scheduled for 90 minutes and was kept within the 90-minute timeframe. Some participants completed the interview in less than 90 minutes, but each participant was scheduled for a 90-minute interview. The interviews were recorded on the Zoom platform and with an audio recorder. The 15 interviews ranged in time from 43 minutes to 90 minutes, with the average interview being just under 73 minutes.

Each interview was transcribed and emailed to each participant for member-checking. Most participants responded that they were comfortable with the transcription of each interview. One participant responded with further clarification and context to a few of the questions.

Unexpected Circumstances

There were a few circumstances that occurred during data collection that caused the flow of the interview to experience a few pauses or short breaks. Of the 15 participant interviews, there were brief interruptions in six of the interviews. Time is one of the most precious commodities for accomplished education leaders. The in-person face-to-face interview was in the participant's home and included two short breaks so the participant could attend to family matters. Five of the video-conferencing interviews experienced brief internet connection issues within the interviews. I addressed interruptions by

recapping the last portion of the interview before the interruption occurred. All participants picked up where they left off before the interruptions and did not show any evidence of frustration or distraction from the interruption.

I conducted one video-conference interview from a hotel during a time I was traveling for work. Possibly due to an issue with the hotel's wi-fi connection, the Zoom recording on my laptop was missing approximately 10 minutes of the interview. I recovered and transcribed the portion of the interview through my back-up audio recording of the interview.

There are two aspects of the interview design that ameliorated brief interruptions. The IRB approved proposal required in-person interviews or video conferencing. This requirement removed the possibility of just a phone interview where participants can be tempted to multitask with other work such as texting, checking email, driving, or attending to other matters. The other aspect that decreased the impact of brief interruptions was scheduling the interview for 90 minutes. A delayed start or brief interruption would have been much more problematic if the interview was scheduled for 30 minutes, but the allotment of 90 minutes per interview allowed for a comfortable interview that was not rushed or thrown off by short interruptions.

While I would have preferred to have no interruptions in any of my interviews, I was very satisfied with the caliber of education leaders I was able to recruit for the study, the generosity of time they gave to the interview, and the quality and depth of engagement each participant shared within the interviews.

Increased Sample Size

Initially I had intended to interview eight to 10 accomplished education leaders. I initially thought my decision to increase the sample size beyond eight to 10 was due to my desire to have a more even balance in numbers between traditional public school participants and charter school/school choice participants. However, when I examined my first eight interviews, the differences were not dramatic. Of my first eight interviews, 37.5% (3) were from a charter school/school choice background, and 62.5% (5) were from a traditional public school background. After increasing my sample size, my charter school/school choice background increased to 40% (6), and my traditional public school background was 60% (9).

I believe part of my reasoning for increasing the sample size is that my positive response rates to email invites were different between the two different groups of accomplished education leaders. My email invitations received more positive responses from NNSTOY members than Aspen Pahara Fellows. Of my first eight interviews, 25% (2) were Aspen Pahara Fellows and 75% (6) were NNSTOY members. Increasing my sample size to 15 resulted in 40% (6) Aspen Pahara Fellows and 60% (9) NNSTOY members.

I could make the case that nearly doubling my sample size improved saturation; however, upon further reflection, I could have completed the study based on the first eight interviews. The eight interviews would have resulted in themes and conclusions that would not have been dramatically different.

I believe that I increased my sample size based less on strategy and more on the joy and deep emotional satisfaction of interviewing highly accomplished leaders. Interviewing highly accomplished thoughtful education leaders was like being a musician and getting to interview the best and most amazing rock stars. I often finished an interview in the early morning with the feeling of having just experienced something that was amazing, inspirational, and awesome. Deep down, I wanted to begin every day interviewing an accomplished education leader. Although the field portion of the dissertation process was absolutely exhilarating, I realized (and my dissertation chair reminded me) that there is always a desire to add just a couple more participants and that field work cannot be extended indefinitely. I reluctantly came out of the field after 15 in-depth interviews.

Data Analysis

I approached data analysis with a social constructionist approach interested in how Tiebout competition is perceived and constructed from the perspectives of 15 accomplished education leaders. I used a modified Bernauer's (2015) three phase process for connecting the data from the interviews to the research question. Bernauer's first phase consisted of deeply listening and reflecting on the interview recordings. I wrote deep listening memos for each of the 15 participant interviews. The transcription process was also a deep listening reflective experience.

An exact application of Bernauer's (2015) method would have developed themes only from the deep listening memos. I modified Bernauer's (2015) method and developed codes and themes from the deep listening memos and the transcripts of the 15 participant

interviews. During the participant interviews, I asked participants to describe where their story or example fit on the conceptual framework, the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework. During the interviews, participants shared their experiences of increasing trust, improving quality, and building capacity. Participants then described how or if competition affected their experience and where or if their experience fit into the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework. The fifteen components of the effectiveness framework were included as preliminary codes.

The transcripts were coded using an iterative process as text was coded into the preliminary codes. Within the coding of each transcript, new codes and categories would emerge. As new codes emerged, previously coded transcripts would be recoded where appropriate to make connections with the new codes and categories that had developed from the original coding. Throughout the iterative process, codes would be combined and merged or renamed as categories and themes developed.

Throughout the process, the qualitative software tool *NVivo 12 Professional* acted as an efficient organized filing cabinet for the project. NVivo provided an effective way to organize and document codes, coded transcript text, categories, themes, the 15 components of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework, the 15 coded transcripts, and the deep listening memos. NVivo also proved to be a powerful and time-saving workhorse during the data analysis. I began to manually track how many participants identified each of the 15 components of the effectiveness framework during their stories about trust, capacity, and quality. As the task was taking hours and became tedious, I realized that I could use NVivo to query all the participant identified codes

linked to the components of the effectiveness framework and then list for each participant which of the 15 components in the conceptual framework were identified for trust, capacity, and quality. The tedious task that was taking hours was completed in just a few seconds.

The theoretical framework of Tiebout competition is based on the belief that quality will improve when competition is injected into providing public goods such as education (Tiebout, 1956). Adam Smith described the competition of markets as acting as an “invisible hand” that increases efficiency and productivity (Smith, 1776; Tiebout, 1956). I needed to make the “invisible hand” more visible within this study as participants described positive and negative effects of competition in different levels of competition. Competition was subdivided in coding to Competition Between Students, Competition Between Teachers, Competition Between Schools, and Competition Between Traditional Public Schools and Charters. The positive and negative descriptions of competition were coded into categories of Intended Consequences of Competition and Unintended Consequences of Competition.

Discrepant Cases

As the literature review in Chapter 2 demonstrated, improving public education through Tiebout competition is a deeply controversial education policy with strong supporters and detractors. In this study, I often had positive statements about competition and negative statements about competition from the same education leader in the same interview. I did not have a discrepant case that was completely at odds with the results and conclusions of the study. I did have a few of the leaders of non-profit education

organizations want to confirm that they fit the study because they did not come into education leadership through a pathway of being a K-12 classroom teacher. I assured them that they met the criteria for inclusion in the study (Aspen Pahara Education Fellow or NNSTOY member) and that their unique perspective and experiences would be valuable to the study. Their subsequent interviews provided perspectives that enhanced the quality of the study.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

As described in Chapter 3, credibility was enhanced by prolonged engagement (Houghton et al., 2013) through the 90-minute interviews. Credibility was also strengthened by using a purposeful criterion sample of highly recognized and accomplished education leaders. I did adjust my intentions on using a reflexivity journal. I realized that I didn't want to have duplicate work with multiple systems documenting the same process. Instead of having a separate reflexivity journal, I used the memo feature of the *NVivo 12 Professional* software system so that NVivo became my organizing system and journal. I did adjust my strategy for inviting participants when I realized I was receiving a higher proportion of positive responses to join the study from NNSTOY members than Aspen Pahara Fellows. I increased my focus on invites to Aspen Pahara Fellows.

Transferability

A social constructionist qualitative study with a sample size of 15 accomplished education leaders does not demonstrate transferability that can be generalized to all of

public education in the United States. However, as the literature review in Chapter 2 demonstrated, there is not one qualitative or quantitative study on Tiebout competition in U.S. public schools that has been widely embraced by educators and policymakers as being applicable and transferrable in general to public education in the United States.

The readers of this study can determine the transferability of this study to their own settings and circumstances (Houghton et al., 2013). This study included accomplished education leaders from different settings (rural, suburban, urban) who were geographically diverse (14 different states) and from different backgrounds (charter community and traditional public schools). The consistency in some of the themes from the diverse participants with specific examples and stories tied to practice and policy will likely resonate in meaningful ways to many diverse educators and policymakers

Dependability

The degree of dependability of a study is strongly linked to whether the conclusions and results are reasonable and convincing based on the data and its analysis (Patton, 2002). I recorded the interviews through the Zoom software and had a backup audio recording of each interview. I transcribed the interviews and conducted member-checking with all participants. The transcripts, deep listening reflections, and coding are all documented within NVivo software. Quotes can be directly linked to the transcripts. NVivo also acts as the filing cabinet and an organizational tool that provides evidence for the results and conclusions of the study.

Confirmability

If needed, the findings and conclusions could be corroborated. Other researchers could examine the participant transcripts, deep listening reflections, and transcript coding that is all organized within the NVivo 12 Professional software file.

Results

The results of the study found several themes that are described in this section. Key themes were the description of healthy and unhealthy competition in public education, the strong and overlapping connections between leaders' experiences improving quality, increasing trust, and building capacity and linking those connections to the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework, the negative or lack of interaction between leaders' experiences and Tiebout competition, and the equity concerns of Tiebout competition. Themes around the education leaders' perspectives around the two key criteria for Tiebout competition to work were examined and described. Tiebout competition requires that parents select schools based on quality and that schools improve when facing Tiebout competition.

Healthy and Unhealthy Competition

Sports (Stallings & Bennett, 2003), Wall Street (Geist, 2012), and corporate businesses (Edmondson, 2012) differentiate between forms of healthy and unhealthy competition. Some successes are heralded as innovative and others are condemned as cheating. Each sector determines legally the behaviors that reward exemplary performance and that punish fraud. This study can assist in identifying examples and

places on the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework where competition has a helpful or hurtful effect on public education.

The practice of teachers observing each other teaching (peer observation) was noted by several participants as a strategy to improve quality and increase the capacity of school. Education leaders' social constructions of Tiebout competition differed at times on whether peer observation was a collaborative, trusting experience where colleagues learn and grow in effectiveness from each other or whether peer observation had a component of Tiebout competition where each individual needed to "up their game" to compete with each other. For some peer observation was a competitive process and for others peer observation was the antithesis of competition. Peer observation is a process that increases transparency, trust, and collaboration between educators. Peer observation can be positively linked to several components of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework. Healthy competition in public education increases collaboration and trust and mitigates the negative aspects of "winners and losers" as much as possible in the process or program design.

Participant 3 shared some examples of how healthy competition improves performance but also is a negative for some students:

I had some students submit to the [State] Symposium this year, some of their AP Stat work. And so the kids that did that, took some extra time. And what I value about that competition wasn't so much like, I mean there are a couple of them got some money and some recognition. That was cool. But all of them were then willing to come in and work for an extra two or three hours to get ready for it, to

write a better paper and to edit it one extra time, and to put together some better graphs, or to do some better analysis. I know the competition can play a role to do that. Same thing with Academic Decathlon. We are a very competitive team ... and what that does do, is it takes the students that are on our team, and it encourages them to study not two hours a week, but literally 20 hours a week because they want to be that successful by having that attitude ... though I know for every kid we get, there are two or three that are turned off to the program because they're like, "Hey, I would love to hang out and learn some new cool stuff but I'm not going to put in the [20 hours a week] time to compete for it."

Unhealthy competition could be defined as competition that decreases collaboration and has not factored equity concerns or made attempts to mitigate the perceptions of “winners and losers” into the design of the process or program. Participant 2 shared his perspective of how firing educators based on their student test assessment scores would undermine the collaboration needed to build the capacity and effectiveness of the school:

So I'm going to keep my job and you're going to lose yours? Why in God's green earth would I ever share a dang thing with you if it might make you that much better of a teacher? Instead, I'm going to be competing against you for job security and why would I help a new teacher? Because it might more quickly hasten them on the curve to being ahead of me based on a particular observation.

The ability to improve quality, increase trust, and build capacity through the lens of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework can provide educators and

policymakers some ways to amplify the effects of healthy competition and mitigate the effects of unhealthy competition.

Strong Connections Between Quality, Trust, and Capacity

The separate stories and examples that accomplished education leaders shared as to how they improved quality, increased capacity, and built trust were tightly interconnected. For this study and within the interview guide (Appendix B), capacity was defined as “a process of equipping a school with the skills or resources to more effectively meet the needs of students.” Of the 15 capacity stories, all 15 accomplished leaders described improving quality and included components that required building trust with colleagues, teachers, or students. In a similar manner, within the building trust stories, the 15 accomplished leaders also described increasing capacity and improving quality.

When education leaders shared their stories about improving the quality of a school, 100% (15) also described increasing capacity and 80% (12) also described increasing trust with colleagues, educators, or students.

Strong Connections to the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework

The accomplished education leaders saw strong connections between the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework and their experiences of improving quality, increasing capacity, and building trust. Participants self-identified where their personal examples fit on the framework. The theme that resonated the strongest with the 15 leaders was School and Classroom Leadership with 73.3% (11 out of 15) for quality, 46.7% (7 out of 15) for trust, and 60% (9 out of 15) for capacity. As shown in Table 4,

the components of the Ontario K-12 Effectiveness Framework that participants most strongly identified with their personal experiences were School and Classroom Leadership, Student Engagement, Assessment For As Of Learning, and Curriculum Teaching and Learning.

Table 4

Percentage and Number of Participant Stories With Self-Identified Themes

Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework theme	Quality story	Trust story	Capacity story
School and classroom leadership	73.3% (11)	46.7% (7)	60.0% (9)
Student engagement	53.3% (8)	13.3% (2)	20.0% (3)
Assessment for as of learning	46.7% (7)	20.0% (3)	33.3% (5)
Curriculum teaching and learning	46.7% (7)	26.7% (4)	40.0% (6)

Two participants thought that the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework was not a perfect fit for some of their experiences. When connecting the trust experience to the framework, Participant 11 wanted a more explicit statement of the importance of collaborative trusting relationships in the framework:

Well I guess Systems Thinking. It's a foundational. I might say [pause] maybe this isn't right. And I'd love [pause] I might say it's missing and that might be a problem ... all of the things like trust, relationship building, rituals, routines, all the very, very big work that's foundational.

While connecting the capacity building experience to the framework, Participant 11 also stated, “But I would say, again, you might think about the piece that's missing is that explicit notion: relationships, buy-in, discourse.” Participant 13 also thought something was missing from the framework:

Well, you know, I have to say when I looked at this, the thing that seemed to be missing was this strong component that we're getting in our qualitative data

gathering over and over. Which is that "connect interpersonally." Yes. You do your curriculum planning. Yes, you do all this other stuff. But the "interpersonal connection" between teacher and student and between instructional team leader ... and teachers is extremely strong.

Tiebout competition is not a component of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework. Based on the summary of the connections to the framework, there was not strong evidence that competition was crucial to the success stories of the accomplished education leaders. Participants linked their quality, trust and capacity experiences to the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework with the exception of three of the 45 different experiences collected from the 15 accomplished education leaders. The two participants that thought the framework was missing something didn't think the framework was missing competition but a more explicit statement of the importance of collaborative, trusting, inter-connected relationships. The most important themes for success described by education leaders in their personal experiences were school and classroom leadership, the use of assessment to guide and inform instruction, a focus on the quality of curriculum and teaching, and careful attention to meaningful ways to engage students with each other and their learning.

Tiebout Competition Interactions With Quality, Capacity, and Trust

Tiebout competition was not a component on the framework so questions about the interactions between competition and the leaders' experiences with quality, capacity, and trust were asked directly. Many accomplished education leaders described their success experience as having minimal or no interaction with competition. Several

education leaders described competition in a negative light or as an obstacle to be overcome or an effect to be mitigated. A few participants described competition as a positive force that helped provide a more successful environment. The percentage of education leaders that viewed competition as having negative, minimal, or no impact was 80% for quality experiences, 80% for trust experiences, and 86.7% for capacity experiences. Table 5 shows further detail on how education leaders described the impact of competition.

Table 5

The Impact of Competition on Education Leaders' Personal Stories

	None or minimal	Negative	Mixture of positive and negative	Positive
Personal story of quality	40.0% (6)	40.0% (6)	0.0% (0)	20.0% (3)
Personal story of trust	40.0% (6)	40.0% (6)	6.7% (1)	13.3% (2)
Personal story of capacity	66.7% (10)	20.0% (3)	6.7% (1)	6.7% (1)

The interactions between Tiebout competition and education leaders' experiences were predominantly nonexistent, minimal, or negative; however, the quality experiences had the highest percentage (20%) with three education leaders describing competition as having a positive influence. A more detailed description of each participant quality story and competition interactions is in the appendices (Appendix: Accomplished Leader Quality Stories and Effect of Competition).

One strong positive example of Tiebout competition in the quality experiences was where teacher leaders received higher compensation for being responsible for the student performance of all students in a small cluster of teachers. The teacher leaders lost their leadership positions if the cluster was not being sufficiently successful. Even in this

positive Tiebout competition example, competition was not the only force at play. The team leaders received substantial support to develop skills to lead their teams in ways that focused on high quality instruction with a well-implemented curriculum and aligned assessments that informed instruction. Several education leaders described the value of transparency of practice where teachers observe and learn from each other by observing each other teach. The peer observation occurred formally and informally. Some leaders described this transparency in terms of collaboration and trust and others described the transparency as competitive. Participant 8 described peer observation with a competitive lens but also described collaborative trusting relationships:

And, we all kind of came in there feeling like, I don't know, that we're going to do really, really well. And so you would kind of go into other people's rooms and I know that there are people who I've learned a ton from and some people I've felt competitive with. And it was never to the extent where like, we're going to tear each other down or do anything to the person. But yeah, I think we all wanted to be the best teacher at that school too. And it was just nobody was going to be the best teacher at that school ... Yeah, it became a normal part of the school. I've spent almost every prep period in somebody else's classroom in the back ... and then it was very normal for other teachers to come into my classroom just the same. And then we'd find some time to debrief. I found so much. It wasn't just with the other math teachers, I found so much inspiration in the science teacher... and with our English teacher next door. She was just so special. So anyway, it was in that there are so many teachers who are doing that, just trying to get better, then

it did become part of the school culture. It started off as something structured. Then we lost the structure and it just became this brief free-flowing sort of professional learning organism.

Participant 1 was focused on improving ELA instructional practice and having a trusting culture within the school within a competitive mindset:

So here's the thing, within our school, and maybe this is formal, maybe it's informal. We like to pride ourselves as being the best department in the school. Some of the things that we do are out of a culture of being the best department in this school. So we tend to look at how Social Studies is, whether that's good or bad. How Math is doing, how Science is doing, and we want to be able to say that we are the best department based on our interim tests results, based on the level of instruction happening in our classes. We pride ourselves on being better than the other departments in this school. So that's number one. Number two, we are in competition with the comprehensive high schools that are in our cluster. We want to always do better than them. We don't want to be on the bottom at all. And so part of our goals, in terms of being better in PARCC [standardized test] and getting scores up is for us and for our own professional growth and learning and credit, but some of it is definitely to beat other schools and to be the best department in the school.

While three education leaders described positive interactions with competition, 12 education leaders described their quality experiences as having a non-

existent, minimal, or negative interaction with Tiebout competition. Participant 2 described a competitive environment that was a barrier:

As we sat around the table writing, initially there was a lot of competition as far as everyone sort of wanting to view each other or wanting to be viewed as the right one or the one with the most experience. The idea of "You're new to our building, you don't know how we do things here at [School Name]." And the other half of the table saying, "Well you're new to teaching sixth grade, you don't know how things should be done. You don't know sixth graders, the mindset of a sixth grader." So there was a lot of that sort of competition involved. So I took a lot of nuance to sort of shepherd it, finally sort of herd the cats in a direction where everyone was willing to grow in the same direction for the same team versus doing their own thing.

Participant 4 described how competition can decrease the quality of teacher peer observation experiences:

And I think that that does fall into a bit of a competition thing. I think that if you've not built a collaborative trusting learning community, you can get people who go in and start observing each other's classrooms and it becomes a one-upmanship.

Participant 5's experience acknowledged a small motivational force from competition that was secondary to the much larger moral force:

I was pretty certain if you can't pass an AP exam with at least a 3. And that was the other thing that was really concerning was the number of 1's [lowest Advance

Placement Exam score], so not even 2's ... I'm not a terribly competitive person, but part of me did want to beat her [previous teacher with low AP pass rate]. not beat her [gestured with clenched fists] but wanted to prove that I can get these scores up and I can do so in a way where kids are also really excited about learning. So there, I'd say there's a little bit of competition there though. I don't know that it was competition as much as just like a moral imperative: we can't keep having kids performing at this level.

Several participants were similar to Participant 11 in describing the idea of competition as a motivating force as an odd or unnatural concept:

There were some people who are more competitive than others, but I would say in general it was a remarkably collaborative, intentionally collaborative ... No, I can't even. It would never ever even [have] occurred to me to say it was a competitive environment.

Participant 15 described a common concern that competition can undermine collaboration and teamwork:

With the Science Department story that I shared, it was actually the antithesis of competition because if you're going to rate teachers based on test scores ... nobody wants to share their materials.

Possibility of Tiebout Competition Harming Struggling Learners

Within the study, two education leaders shared experiences of increasing the success rate of struggling, reluctant learners that are prone to failure or drop-out. Both experiences included a Response to Intervention (RtI) program that creatively adjusted

staff and schedules to build trust and success with students that struggled in school and often had low-trust relationships with educators. Both programs ultimately were eliminated. Participant 3 described one program that failed due to competition with the school system's need for bureaucratic efficiency and maintaining historical practice:

It was about maybe 30 kids each semester who were in this looping part, trying to catch up where we would put in a No Grade and then after the two or three weeks that they were finally caught up, we would then put in the grade change form. We were told that "this is too many grade change forms. We don't want to deal with that headache." And so it fell apart. We offered. We said, "Well teach us how to do the grade changes in the computer. We'll do it for you." They're like, "No, we can't give you that because then you'll change all the grades or something." That paperwork part ... pushed back enough that our Downtown office actually just said, "You cannot do that anymore."

Participant 10 described another program which eventually ended due to Tiebout competition from more affluent and successful parents for the additional resources allocated to at-risk students:

At first the principal ... pushed back and said, "You know, students need different levels of support and these are kids who need more levels of support." They just went around the principal and went to the superintendent and the school board and that's where things started ... so what happened was, is that there was a requirement for these kids who were failing to go to this class. What then ended up happening was we went to a policy to say anybody can go to that class. And so

now what happened was you have these high-achieving kids who are coming in who are monopolizing the time from the teacher. Then the teacher just kind of marginalizes those other kids and says "Here, go ahead and work on this worksheet or do whatever." So part of it was we lost support from the community, certainly, but also from some teachers who felt like, and this again goes back to why it's so important to have a shared mission and vision. Some teachers who felt like, "Well, why shouldn't I be supporting those kids who want to see me? Why should I be working with these kids who are reluctant to see me?" And that's because it's much easier to work with those kids [that] are fired up to want to come in to see you, to talk about issues versus that reluctant learner.

This example suggests Tiebout competition without guardrails to protect against inequitable outcomes may lead to more affluent parents with more political and social capital advocating for their children in ways that increase inequity. Participant 10 also stated that there were several "ugly comments" from the parents of affluent, successful students to pressure the school administration to focus less attention on struggling learners. When asked to provide examples of ugly comments, Participant 10 gave three examples: "Why should my student be denied resources just because those families didn't do a good enough job with their kids to get them ready for school?" and "You're keeping my kid from getting into the best school that they could possibly get into" and "Just because those parents don't speak English and they can't get their kids to speak English to come into the classroom so that they can be successful, why should my kid be denied resources?" These examples suggest that Tiebout competition in and of

itself may not inoculate schools from equity concerns. There is no “invisible hand” that bends school systems towards equity.

Theoretical Foundation for Tiebout Competition in Public Education

The theoretical basis for Tiebout competition as a mechanism to improve U.S. public education is that schools will be motivated to improve when having to compete with other schools for students and that parents will select schools based on quality.

After study participants shared their personal experiences on improving quality, building trust, and increasing capacity along with their perspectives how and if those experiences interacted with Tiebout competition, I probed deeper by asking education leaders their perspectives on the belief that schools improve when facing Tiebout competition, that parents choose schools based on quality, and their overall impression of Tiebout competition as a key lever to improve U.S. public education.

Perspectives on Why Parents Choose Schools

Forty percent (6) of the education leaders shared that they thought safety was the most important factor for parents when deciding where to send their child to school. Some education leaders with children also shared that safety was their top concern: “We're currently in that process ... The middle schools in our county are not great, especially in my area. And so we have to make a decision and we do make it on quality but we make it on safety.” (Participant 1). A similar sentiment was shared by Participant 15, “When a mom puts her kid on the bus ... the number one thing they care about is that, that kid comes back on the bus at the end of the day intact, physically intact, emotionally

intact.” Participant 9 shared the belief that the opportunities for parents in communities of poverty are quite different than the opportunities for more affluent parents:

Families who fall into the high ... or the free and reduced lunch category. They don't clearly have zip code options. And so what drives them? Interestingly, ... quality is down the list. ... You could show them data until they're blue in the face that the school has failed two generations of kids including them. The parents went to those same schools, but there is an emotional attachment to your neighborhood school. What do parents say they want? They want their kids to be safe. They want their kids to be happy. They want their kids to learn, but in that order.

Participant 6 described a frustration with the benefits of diversity not being factored into measurements of quality while more diverse schools have fewer resources and opportunities:

And so it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. So I think people are fleeing integrated schools because test scores aren't as good. And so if you were looking at integration and you wanted your kids to be around kids from all over the world and families all around the world, that'd be one factor that never shows up. So when people look at quality, they're looking at test scores and graduation rates, which in affluent cities and affluent schools, it's an easy benchmark to hit. So I don't know. So my cynical side is people use quality as a way to flee integrated schools but at the same time you walk into [Affluent School District] and the

opportunities and the access and the resources are so vastly different than [Poverty District] that it is like there is a quality issue. So I don't know.

Participant 8 described how parents making decisions based on perceived quality that is difficult to determine and frequently based on “word of mouth” perceptions that are imperfect or open to bias:

It's so hard I think for parents to actually truly understand the ... quality of a school. So much of their framing and their understanding ... is done through narrative from other families, other parents. And so in [East Coast City], there's this sort of narrative that like charter schools are good schools. That's not always the case. There's some really bad charter schools and there's some really great traditional public schools, but that narrative persists.

Participant 10 described how parents perceptions are often formed quickly and intuitively:

So I'm coming from my privileged background as a white middle income parent, when I hear a lot of my friends talk about the schools they want to go into, they want to make sure it's the right fit. Do I walk into this and is it a warm fuzzy? Does my student feel connected to what's going on within there? ... They certainly will look at some of the academic results, but also ... they just want to know that they can trust that the school's going to nurture their kid. I'm always just interested that sometimes a parent says that they can walk into a building and right away know whether or not it's going to be a great fit for their kid, even though they haven't asked their kid if it's a great thing.

Participant 12 described a personal example where overall school test scores were valued less than the quality of programs offered at the school:

And honestly for me, my child is about to go to a school that has very average test scores for our zone. What has drawn me to the school is the programming. So she'll be in a dual language immersion programming and that is what I value. I value her having a global perspective.

Participant 6 described a common concern that parents who value diversity are provided uneven choices:

I had to really wrestle with this, so I chose a school for my son. So he's in ninth grade. It's a school, he's in the minority. It's about 15 percent white. I mean like some of the assignments and the quality. I do, I am like, "Well, you don't have any homework, how do you not have any homework?" But then I pick him up from basketball practice and then he's got Mohammed and Samage and like all these boys who are all 14 year old boys. They're from all different backgrounds. I'm driving them to their houses and, and I'm like, "This is priceless." So, he could be really, you know, I don't know, I think I'll make sure that he takes some challenging classes and things like that, but it is hard. It's really like, "Okay, what do you value more?" Because those two things don't go together in an education system, unfortunately. What are we doing as adults?

Participant 7 shared the back and forth education leaders experience when considering where to send their own children:

I go back and forth. My kids go to public school. They haven't had a perfect experience by any means, and maybe it's trying to justify it as a parent, but sometimes I think "It's okay for kids to have to struggle a little bit. It's okay for them to have to deal with the teacher who's not particularly nice or not nice the way that they're used to us being toward them." They're in school with kids who are hard kids. Kids who were very, very poor and have ... either learning disabilities or have behavioral issues that sometimes are tied to trauma they've experienced or poverty ... But my kids as a result have become very, very comfortable with kids who are very different from them. Kids who look different from them. Kids who act different from them. Kids who have, my daughter always calls it, "Oh, she has needs." Like kids who have very different kind of learning disability needs or sensory needs or physical disabilities. To me that's a huge benefit of public education, is kind of that idea that you are in this big cross section of America.

Participant 14 described overall differences between the ways in which parents select schools based on performance on standardized assessments:

In rural [Midwest State] and in a urban [Midwest State] ... the kids, they're probably, most all of them are eligible to go to other schools because it's a low performing school and has been for so long. The parents do not act on that because it's their home. That's where they are and oftentimes the, in some cases the other schools they would go to, the environment there, and the parents think is every bit as bad ... And the same is true in rural [Midwest State]. ... even if a

school is not performing the way parents, the way it probably should, parents won't go that extra step to move kids to another school. Now in [Affluent Suburban District], ... parents literally pick up and move from district to district if there's a district that does better. And so there, there is competition there. I was in the Assistant Superintendent's office when she got a call from a parent that said 97 percent of ... kids had met and or exceeded on the current ... testing that was done that year. Whereas in [Nearby District], it was 98 percent. If I wouldn't have been there and heard the call, I wouldn't have believed it, but this parent was complaining because [Nearby District] was one percentage point ahead.

Education leaders shared several different factors besides quality at play when parents choose a school and even when they personally are selecting a school for their child. Overall, Participant 13 described parents' choices being driven by "values and convenience." Participant 2 also explained how many parents in one school district chose charter schools based on a policy that provided better transportation options:

The district has nine elementary schools ... So if you live within a mile of any of the nine schools, you did not qualify for free busing. But if you simply sign your child up for the charter school, you could have lived next door to the school and still got bused to the charter school. So we have many, many friends, people we know, who simply chose the charter school because instead of their precious little kindergartener having to walk three blocks or them needing to drive their child to school for the next seven years, they were guaranteed free busing for seven years because it doesn't matter where you live.

The perspectives of education leaders provide evidence several factors come into play when parents are deciding where to send their child. Safety and convenience are important factors parents consider. Several education leaders shared within their interviews that Tiebout competition does not lead parents to select schools based on quality alone and that Tiebout competition in and of itself raised concerns in terms of equitable opportunities, resources, and outcomes.

Perspectives on if Schools Improve When Facing Tiebout Competition

Another crucial component of the theory of Tiebout competition in public education is that the quality of schools will improve when schools have to compete for students and funding. An example of a school improving in the face of competition was shared by Participant 1:

It's a point of professional pride, but it's definitely to get more students to come into the school because the more enrollment that we have, the more staff we can have. And that always supports us ... That's one of the reasons why we establish academies. So we have an Engineering Academy so that we can attract students who want to go into engineering post high school. So they come to us because we're one of the few schools that have an Engineering Academy. Right now, we're looking to build a [School Name] Leadership Academy. So the goal of that is competition. We want to say that we're the only school that offers this, so come to our school and go through this program.

This is a distinct example where Tiebout competition is a causal factor in improving course programs and offerings for students. This is exactly the type of

response to Tiebout competition that is required for competition to be a driver and lever for improving U.S. public education. Despite the positive response, Participant 1 saw limitations on improving schools through competitions where selective application schools have a distinct advantage and schools facing more challenges face a distinct disadvantage when competing directly: "I think competition is great up to a point and then it plateaus and then it might even become negative." Participant 2 also thought competition causes schools to improve but at a steep price in terms of fairness of resource allocation and additional burden on some schools:

I do believe that the presence of those charter schools forces the district in certain ways to improve and be a lean, mean, fighting machine and provide a better, higher quality of product of education. But yet, sadly ... at the same time that same concept of those schools' existence has really undercut our public schools right off at the knee and it's just, you know, just decimating what was done to funding ... pulling the cream of the crop students and you know, it's not helping a broad mix of diverse students, but the charter school and the kids that go in with their learning needs ... [the charter schools] just drive them out as quickly as they can. And the so many negatives in the way the charter schools developed. I still remember when it was first being developed about 10 years ago, one of the parents not knowing I was a public school teacher, said, "We're so excited. Before they opened up the registrar, they made sure that it was completely filled with all of our friends." I mean it's a country club private school run on public school dollars that robbed the public schools of those dollars at a time when we are so

tight. When IEP minutes aren't being met and when the percentage of our students with high needs is greater because we lost such a certain segment of the population to charter schools, So the competition is there. It does force us to really look at how we do things, but that same competition really has a lot of negative impact on the resources available to the school.

Participant 11 was well aware of the criticism of charter schools from traditional public schools and approached the issue from the perspective that school districts also offer parents choices and compete for students:

So one of the single biggest arguments against the charters is "A: You're creaming, so you're taking the best kids. And B, even if you take the worst kids, you're taking our money." So the conversation in my head is a couple of things on the creaming. Some do. And I don't think they should. I don't think charters should be allowed to cream. That said, my kids go to a public school down the street that's a magnet school. They had to test in. It's the district school system. The district set up that magnet school. The district sees all kids as their kids in the district. And that school where my kids go is pilloried by teachers and in the community, who say that that school is, is creaming their kids. And they are, it's a test-based school. So when I think about the money going somewhere, if we go back to where I said just a few minutes ago. If a district sees all kids are our kids, districts are the chartering agency.

Of the 15 education leaders, none portrayed competition as the strongest or best lever to improve U.S. public education. While a few positive examples were

shared where schools had responded to competition in a way that improved schools, most participants had a similar sentiment to Participant 9. Participant 9 shared an unease with competition as the primary driver for improving schools and believed that competition has limited returns and usually included collateral damage:

I look at the whole debacle is what I would call it in [U.S. City] over the last six years or seven years. ... I think the collateral damage from the positive outcomes might be too much to bear for a community. So we're going to take [U.S. City] and we're going to create competition ... these schools have failed kids for two decades. We're going to take them over. We're going to fix the schools. So fast forward about five years. What's happened? Still the jury's out on how well those ... schools are performing. ... They ... improved some, but at what cost? The whole notion that people not from [U.S. City] are going to swoop into town and fix the schools sent a clear message to the thousands of female African American educators who were born in [U.S. City], who went to [U.S. City] Public Schools, who went to local [U.S. City] colleges, who have been serving those kids for decades that "we're not good enough." ... And so to me ... what do you call it, "Was the squeeze worth the juice when you look at the discord that was created both racial and governance model wise?" ... [Local African American educators perceived that they were] being disrespected, as being assumed to not have the talent to do the work. When in fact in some direct cases we're aware of it was the school leader who was clueless, who was egotistical, who was male. So there's a gender issue and a race issue. They weren't, they simply weren't given reason to

perform. They weren't given permission to perform. These were extraordinarily talented teachers who were in crappy environments. And the assumption was that the teachers were failing the kids, not the environment and that the teachers, those teachers weren't going to be part of the solution. And to me that's just wrong headed. In the limited number of cases I saw, they were absolutely, I would have hired any one of them in a school.

Another theme from the study was the concern about competition creating winners and losers in public education. Two thirds (10) of the education leaders expressed a concern about competition creating winners and losers or especially setting up a situation in public education that creates losers. Participant 3 addressed the concern of creating losers in public education:

School is not something people should lose at. When you go to school, everyone can be successful with things and if you're going to have a competition, someone is going to lose out on it. That said, I think competition can help in small instances or in narrow cases can help kids reach to do more things and to do better things.

Participant 5 framed a similar concern within the larger context of inequity within public education::

So I really struggle with competition being a core element that we are arguing is sort of positive for school reform writ large. And I think part of that is I believe deeply ... competition inevitably means you have winners and losers. I think that's fine, if what it means is, you have some schools that ultimately close because they're not serving kids well. I actually feel very comfortable with

phasing out schools that aren't serving kids well, if the right supports were put in place to try and ensure that school could be successful ... And I think that's one of the things we struggle with in the United States with what is supposed to be and is not, sort of this egalitarian school system, is that we're built as a capitalist system that has winners and losers. And then you layer on top of that a system and a school system that was built to serve white privileged individuals. It was not built to serve all kids. And so I think in many cases when we create sort of this market place, competition of school choice, you end up with winners and losers and particularly when we do that in a very unregulated way, it absolutely leads to winners and losers. I believe deeply in processes of authorization. I believe deeply in processes of fair regulation and clear expectations and accountability, but really struggle with sort of this idea that competition in and of itself will lead us to improvement. And I don't quite frankly think there's any evidence that shows that that's the case.

Participant 15 shared a common concern that competition will never be a primary driver for improving public education:

In [East Coast State], you can make a graph with, you know, essentially average income of parent versus test scores. And it's a straight line direct graph. There's very little variation on that. And so if the kids at [Local High Poverty School] are coming in, you know, in the bottom quintile of family income and their test scores are on the bottom quintile of test scores, competition isn't going to fix that. You know, they have a test, they have an education gap because they have a healthcare

gap and a finance gap and a safety gap and all these other things. Competition isn't going to make that better. ... it's like saying, there's a race going on and one of the runners has brand new sneakers and has been training and one of the runners is going barefoot and has one leg. You need to even up some of the other things before we can say we're going to have that race. And you know, I think that's the sort of simplistic capitalistic notion of "We're just going to let a thousand flowers ... charter schools are going to pop up and suddenly the public schools are going to stop being so slothful."

Participant 4 raised the question as to whether competition added value as a strategy to improve public education:

I just think when you think of those quality trust, capacity and competition, which one doesn't fit here, and it is competition. Out of these four things, which one does not fit? If you have great quality, great trust and the right capacity, you don't need competition. Those things. I would replace competition with relationship and now you've got everything you need to really, truly be successful and successful for every child and every school. And that's really what we want.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided the demographics of the 15 participants, the setting for the study, and an explanation for the way in which the data was coded and analyzed. The results and findings from an analysis of the interviews with 15 accomplished education leaders were described in this chapter. The personal experiences of education leaders improving quality, increasing trust, and building capacity along with their interaction

with Tiebout competition were analyzed. The perspectives of education leaders on two fundamental components of the theory of Tiebout competition in public education (parents select schools based on quality and schools improve in the face of competition) were also analyzed and described. Chapter 5 will interpret the results, compare the results to the literature, and suggest further areas to research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of Tiebout competition from the perspectives of 15 practicing accomplished education leaders. The leaders shared their personal experiences improving quality, increasing trust, and building capacity within schools and the interaction of those experiences with competition. Tiebout competition in public education depends on two conditions: schools improving in the face of competition and parents selecting schools based on quality. The accomplished education leaders shared their perspectives on how and if those two conditions worked in practice. The primary research question for this study was as follows: When examining education leaders' perspectives, stories, examples, and descriptions of competition through the lens of Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework, in what ways does competition affect public education in terms of quality, capacity, and trust?

A key finding from the study showed that the accomplished education leaders made strong positive connections between their trust, capacity, and quality experiences and the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework. The primary themes that were aligned with the framework were school and classroom leadership, student engagement, assessment for as of learning, and curriculum teaching and learning. In sharing their stories, overall the vast majority of accomplished education leaders felt their experience had a nonexistent, minimal, or negative experience with competition when improving quality (80%), increasing trust (80%), and building capacity (86.7%). Some participants shared perspectives where they believed schools improved due to facing competition but

those participants also shared concerns about equity and that those modest improvements sometimes included collateral damage that diminished trust and capacity.

In this chapter, I interpret the results described in Chapter 4 within the context of the literature review described in Chapter 2 while also describing the study's limitations, recommendations for future research, and implications for positive social change.

Interpretation of the Findings

Participants' Impact Experiences With Competition

When participants shared their personal examples of improving the quality of a school, 40% (6) felt their story had minimal or no interaction with competition, 40% (6) felt competition was an obstacle or barrier to success that needed to be overcome or mitigated, and 20% (3) felt there were aspects of competition that were positive to improving quality. The percentage of participants who felt that competition had a positive effect on their story of improving trust was 13.3% (2) and 6.7% (1) for their story of building capacity. Competition was not the primary driver for improvement in the examples provided by the accomplished education leaders.

The predominant minimal or negative interactions between education leaders' success experiences and Tiebout competition aligned well with research on how competitive organizations innovate and increase capacity. Schools that responded to Tiebout competition were likely motivated by fear of losing students, staff, and resources. Edmondson (2012) described the importance for competitive organizational teams to learn and collaborate in ways that provide honest feedback within trusting relationships. Edmondson's description for fostering innovative, successful teams thematically aligns

well with the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework and also warns of the limitations of motivating by fear:

We are still largely inured to a fear-based work environment. We believe (most of the time, erroneously) that fear increases control ... We don't immediately see the costs of fear ... many managers believe that without fear people will not work hard enough. (Edmondson, 2012, p. 28)

Tiebout competition's premise is that schools will intrinsically innovate and improve based on the fear of losing students, programs, and resources. Tiebout competition and fear were not motivating forces in the accomplished education leaders' experiences of improving schools, and this conclusion aligns with research on how successful organizations and businesses compete, innovate, and learn (Edmondson, 2012).

Evidence Parents Select Schools Based on Quality Has Qualifiers

One key requirement for Tiebout competition to improve public education is that parents must select a school for their child based on the quality of the school. I found that from the perspectives of accomplished education leaders, parents' perceptions of quality were based imperfectly on informal networks such as "word of mouth." Accomplished education leaders also thought that more affluent suburban families had more access and demanded more access to higher quality schools than families in rural communities or economic disadvantaged families in urban communities. Parents with socioeconomic and political capital had more capacity to change policies and the allocation of resources to better meet their own needs. The two participants who shared that successful RtI

programs that served disadvantaged students were ended due to a desire for bureaucratic efficiency in one case and due to political pressure from more affluent parents in another case are examples where Tiebout competition may exacerbate inequities instead of reducing inequities.

Accomplished leaders also shared that Tiebout competition benefitted and was accessed by more affluent families than economically disadvantaged families. Quality was only one of many factors that parents considered when choosing a school for their child. Safety, the culture of the school, the right fit for their child, and convenience were also strong factors within parent school selection. Multiple participants raised equity concerns in that families who valued diversity and integration seemed to have to make sacrifices in terms of quality.

The findings from this study are in line with the research on how parents select schools. Waslander et al. (2010) found that high socioeconomic families were advantaged in social networks that had higher quality and quantity levels of information than more disadvantaged families (Waslander et al., 2010). Musset (2012) found that parents made choices based more on the ethnic and socioeconomic status of the majority of the children at the school instead of school quality. Montero (2018) determined nine specific factors that affected the decisions of parents who chose charter schools: safety, communication, career readiness, staff dedication, sports and extracurricular activities, class size, special services, location, and admission procedures. The literature review and this study suggest that quality is just one of several factors when parents decide where to send their child to school. This study and the literature review also indicate that equity is a concern since

affluent families are advantaged in the selection process in terms of participation rates and the quantity and quality of information within their social networks during the selection process.

Evidence on the Belief Schools Improve When Facing Competition

One key requirement for Tiebout competition to improve public education is that when schools face Tiebout competition and have to compete for students, the schools will be intrinsically motivated to improve or have the capacity to improve. Overall, accomplished education leaders thought the ability for schools to improve based on facing Tiebout competition raised significant equity concerns, and they instinctively disliked the perception of Tiebout competition creating winners and losers on an uneven playing field.

The positive interactions with competition that were provided by participants included designed strategies meant to mitigate aspects of competition that were likely to decrease trust or capacity. There were not any participants who portrayed Tiebout competition as a grand lever that guaranteed success. The most enthusiastic participant response described a school where staff were motivated to be competitive and described Tiebout competition as a motivating force for making improvements to the school such as academies. However, even that enthusiastic response was tempered with a caveat that raised a concern about fairness and equity Participant 1 shared, “They’re [Nearby Rival School] also an application school, which means that you have to apply to get there. We’re not. And so to compete with them straight away for kids, it’s kind of almost

defeatist because we're operating in two different ways.” Participants frequently raised equity concerns when discussing Tiebout competition.

The education leaders’ perspectives on quality were well aligned with their perspectives on capacity and trust; however, most participants found competition to be an uneasy fit. Even when education leaders shared positive examples about how competition improved schools, there was often a caveat or follow-up description that implied the limited value of competition. The stories and examples about building capacity, improving quality, and increasing trust did not have cautionary footnotes about “collateral damage” or “unintended consequences.” The education leaders’ perspectives on Tiebout competition did not automatically blend with the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework and were often at odds with the framework’s focus on trusting, collaborative teamwork. Participants shared different levels of enthusiasm for competition but even the most positive comments did not view competition as an overall lever that would significantly improve U.S. public education.

The findings in this study add more context to a literature review that also includes concerns about equity when Tiebout competition is considered the primary driver for improving public education. Musset (2012) raised equity concerns about Tiebout competition “creaming” more affluent and advantaged students if school choice programs were not designed to mitigate those tendencies. Waslander et al. (2010) found evidence that schools that faced Tiebout competition often developed strategies to increase their proportion of affluent students with higher levels of prior academic achievement.

Carpenter (2018) examined the perceptions of school district superintendents facing Tiebout competition in the Cape Cod region of Massachusetts. With similarities to this study, Carpenter found that Tiebout competition motivated some schools to improve but also had negative ramifications such as decreasing intradistrict collaboration, and damaging the cohesiveness and the sense of community.

Charter schools and voucher programs have been the primary levers for increasing Tiebout competition in the United States. Nonexperimental studies addressing charter schools and traditional public school achievement have predominantly shown small and inconsistent differences in academic performance (Bifulco & Ladd, 2006; Booker et al., 2007; CREDO, 2014a, 2015b; Hanushek et al., 2007; Sass, 2006; Zimmer et al., 2009) with consistent outperformance often limited to a specific district or geographical region (Abdulkadiroğlu et al., 2011; CREDO, 2013b, 2013c, 2017a). Several small experimental studies on charter schools have shown charter schools outperforming traditional schools (Abdulkadiroğlu et al., 2011; Angrist et al., 2012; Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Hoxby et al., 2009; Hoxby & Rockoff, 2005). However, Gleason et al. (2010) conducted a much larger experimental study in 15 states on 36 oversubscribed charter middle schools and found that traditional public schools had similar academic performance to the charter schools. Charter schools also had a wide variation in quality (Gleason et al., 2010).

This study shows from the perspectives of accomplished education leaders from both the charter/school choice community and traditional public schools that Tiebout competition was not the dramatic lever in and of itself that improved public education.

This finding is consistent with experimental and non-experimental charter studies that have shown varied but similar results to traditional public schools. This finding along with the equity concerns raised by accomplished education leaders is also consistent with several large state voucher programs that have shown voucher students underperforming traditional public school students to the extent that voucher students may have been actually academically harmed (Abdulkadiroğlu et al., 2018; Figlio & Karbownik, 2016; Mills & Wolf, 2016, 2017; Waddington & Berends, 2018; Wolf et al., 2013).

Accomplished Education Leaders Bring Pragmatism to Conflict

The heated conflict between traditional public school advocates and school choice advocates has been compared to a religious war (Teske & Schneider, 2001, p. 609). This study was notable in that accomplished education leaders from the charter school/school choice community and traditional public schools did not have the one-sided heated rhetoric of the conflict in their interviews. The strongest pro-competition statements were from an educational leader in a traditional public school but were also tempered by the same education leader's examples that also showed the limitations and diminishing returns of Tiebout competition. Some of the strongest statements portraying examples of unfairness between charter schools and traditional public schools also included statements from that same participant that Tiebout competition had caused some traditional public schools to improve. Education leaders from both the school choice community and traditional public schools raised concerns about equity and questioned the value and effectiveness of Tiebout competition as a key lever to improve public schools. Those views differed at times with some participants seeing almost no room for

examples of competition fitting into public education in helpful ways and others seeing authorization, regulation, and accountability as key ways to help ensure equity. However, no participant thought there was an “invisible hand” of Tiebout competition that would inherently improve public education for all students. There is a possibility that participants’ pragmatic experiences on-the-ground working within districts and schools reduced the tendency to engage in heated rhetoric and that being education leaders brought a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how education policy works in practice. The pragmatism found in the perspectives of accomplished education leaders may be due the education leaders’ long history of finding ways to increase student success by improving quality, increasing trust, and building capacity within their schools. Participant 11 summed up the concern that the “religious war” nature of conflict around Tiebout competition has a high price that does not benefit students:

If I had to make a bet, I would say, "It doesn't really have a place." What you want to do in a school, in a school system is create a place where everybody wants every teacher and every student to win every day. Competition means there has to be a loser and that would be such a bad outcome. Imagine the morale, the losing school, the losing classroom. That's horrible. That everybody has to be in it all day, every day for each other. I just, I hate saying this because I do, I love athletics, but I don't see in a school's [pause] I can't imagine you want teachers and principals fighting for each other with each other ... this crazy charter/ district hatred. These are all our children in charters and in districts. These are all our families. These are all our schools. We have so much more in common and so

much more good to be done together. The slinging, the mud and the arrows, it just, it boggles my mind. Charters and districts have 89 percent of what they do [in common], they want to do the same things ... clearly the distrust has a higher cost to it.

Limitations of the Study

My interviews with 15 accomplished education leaders included participants from 14 different states that included education leadership experience in traditional public schools and the charter school/school choice community along with experience in urban, suburban, and rural settings. Participants as a whole had expertise at several different grade levels and subject areas which included experience at elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. One limitation of the study is that a sample size of 15 does not allow any disaggregation of data to draw conclusions about perceptions of Tiebout competition in a specific grade level, subject area, or geographic region. The prolonged engagement strategy of having up to 90 minute interviews and the descriptive examples provided by the accomplished education leaders may provide enough context and description to resonate with readers from different regions and backgrounds that the reader can then translate and apply the experience to their own local context.

Another limitation to the study is that the interviews were self-reported data provided through the interview process; however this limitation was mitigated to some extent since the study used an purposeful criterion sample of highly accomplished education leaders that had been recognized for their leadership and effectiveness through selective and prestigious organizations: the Aspen Pahara Fellowship or NNSTOY.

Another limitation within the study was time. My initial plans for the study was to interview eight to 10 accomplished education leaders. I could have completed the study with eight participants but expanded the sample size to 15 accomplished education leaders. I would have loved to have interviewed 100 accomplished education leaders but the study was limited in terms of my time and my capacity as one qualitative researcher. This study was limited in sample size and cannot be described as representative of all accomplished education leaders; however the themes and conclusions from this study are likely to be found in any future qualitative study that explored the perspectives of accomplished education leaders on Tiebout competition and that used the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework as a conceptual framework for the study.

Recommendations

This social constructionist qualitative study used the lens of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework to examine the perspectives of 15 accomplished education leaders on Tiebout competition in public education and on the interactions between competition and their personal experiences of improving quality, increasing trust, and building capacity within schools. The results align well with previous research on charter schools and voucher programs and provide additional context to the “look and feel” of Tiebout competition on-the-ground in the day to day work of education leaders.

Previous research has focused on the performance comparison of charter schools to traditional public schools or the performance comparison of students in voucher programs to similar students in traditional public schools. The comparisons have often produced mixed and uneven results that include equity concerns. Possible areas of future

research could focus within the charter school and traditional school communities on how well the school is doing at improving quality, increasing trust, and building capacity. Future qualitative or quantitative research could benefit by having comparisons that not only compare student achievement but how well schools are implementing components of a school improvement model such as the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework. Previous uneven performance and mixed outcomes may be further explained by how well schools invest in improving quality for all students, building school capacity, and increasing trust with staff, students, and parents. The studies could also more deeply examine how well schools implement healthy forms of competition, mitigate unhealthy forms of competition, and ensure a commitment to equity for all students.

This study of accomplished education leaders included leaders from 14 different states that included leadership experience at the classroom, school, district, and state education levels in urban, rural, and suburban settings. Future research could focus on a similar study that examines the perspectives of accomplished education leaders in one specific geographical area to see if similar conclusions are reached. In a similar manner, a future study could examine just one style of education leadership (teacher leaders, principals, or superintendents) to see if different themes are found. This study found different participation patterns in school choice programs between rural schools and more affluent suburban schools. A future study of accomplished education leaders could more closely examine the perspectives of accomplished rural education leaders and how they improve school quality and capacity and their experiences with Tiebout competition. Several accomplished education leaders in this study felt that some traditional public

schools improved due to the presence of Tiebout competition. A future research study could more deeply explore the perspectives of accomplished education leaders as to whether there are better ways to ensure equity through accountability or another mechanism that would be just as effective at encouraging traditional public schools to improve without Tiebout competition.

Implications

There are few examples that would dramatically impact positive social change more than effectively improving the quality of public education in the United States with a commitment to equity. The short and long term success of the more than 50 million United States students in terms of physical and social health, economic strength, lifetime earnings, and happiness is strongly influenced by the quality of public education. The 1983 Nation at Risk report and the 2010 ESEA Blueprint for Reform portrayed the short term and long term economic strength, innovation, business, trade and national health of the United States as being strongly dependent on the quality of public education. This study added new fresh perspectives from practicing accomplished education leaders on how competition impacts trust, quality, and capacity in public education. The results raised equity concerns that should be carefully mitigated within the design and monitoring of current and future school choice systems.

Furthermore, there is evidence based on the literature review and this study that Tiebout competition alone is not enough to dramatically improve public education in the United States. If Tiebout competition fails to mitigate and monitor equity concerns within the design of school choice programs or fails to adequately create a culture that increases

the components of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework, it is unlikely that Tiebout competition will yield different outcomes than the tepid, anemic, mixed, uneven results described in the literature review. This study's results provide evidence that among accomplished education leaders, there is a skepticism and opposition to the idea that Tiebout competition alone is the best way to improve public education.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation invested more than \$700 million into its Teacher Quality agenda including a three year project which concluded in 2013 to demonstrate that student surveys, teacher observations, and student assessments could be used to measure teaching effectiveness (Will, 2018). The Gates Foundation then partnered and jointly funded a \$575 million project with three school districts to implement a new teacher evaluation system that incorporated student surveys, classroom observations, and student assessment data into the evaluations of all teachers along with targeted professional development (Stecher et al., 2018; Will, 2018). Stecher et al. (2018) evaluated the impact of the three teacher evaluation systems through 2016 and found that the teacher evaluation systems did not substantively improve student learning among all students or among economically disadvantaged minority students in terms of graduation rates, student achievement, or access to highly effective teachers (Stecher et al., 2018). Disappointed with the lack of desired impact, the Gates Foundation ended its significant investments in teacher evaluation systems (Stecher et al., 2018; Will, 2018).

If Tiebout competition were held to the same level of evidence by United States policymakers that the Gates Foundation used for its investments in teacher evaluation systems, the results from this study indicate U.S. accomplished education leaders would

not recommend further investment in any strategy that viewed Tiebout competition alone as a key lever to improve public education. The results from this study also indicate accomplished U.S. education leaders would also recommend the equity concerns described from the accomplished education leaders in this study should be factored in to the design and monitoring of school choice systems, including evaluations that monitor and examine quality, trust, and capacity through the lens of a school improvement framework such as the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework. The results of this study indicate accomplished education leaders do not believe that Tiebout competition alone is a sufficient lever to act as an “invisible hand” to improve student learning for all students in substantive ways that automatically address equity concerns.

Conclusions

In this qualitative social constructionist study, I examined the effects of Tiebout competition from the perspectives of 15 practicing accomplished education leaders through the lens of the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework. The education leaders’ personal experiences improving quality, increasing trust, and building capacity within schools shared many overlapping themes between quality, trust, and capacity but overall had minimal or negative interactions with competition. School and classroom leadership, meaningful and informative assessment that guides instruction, substantive student engagement, and a focus on a strong curriculum and effective teaching were the strongest themes from the Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework that aligned with improving quality, increasing trust, and building capacity within schools.

Tiebout competition depends on two key components: parents selecting schools based on quality and on schools to be motivated to improve and have the capacity to improve when facing competition from other schools. Education leaders raised equity concerns around the participation rates, the quality of choices, and the quantity and quality of information that rural or economically disadvantaged students have compared to more affluent students. Education leaders also identified safety and convenience as significant factors in parents' decision-making process. From the perspectives of education leaders, quality was not the only factor parents used in selecting a school for their child.

Accomplished education leaders did believe that some schools were motivated to improve due to Tiebout competition. One positive Tiebout competition example in this study was how a school developed academy programs to attract, retain, and compete for students. However, no leader saw Tiebout education as a key driver that would alone improve the quality of public education. Even the most positive pro-competition statements included cautions on the diminishing returns, equity concerns, and the limitations of Tiebout competition. A common theme from the education leaders' perspectives was that there were equity concerns and collateral damage since Tiebout competition created winners and losers.

This study adds to the literature base on Tiebout competition by bringing in deeper perspectives and experiences of practicing accomplished education leaders. In addition, examples of healthy competition were described which did not damage quality, trust, capacity and that mitigated the effects of creating winners and losers. Peer

observation was an example of healthy competition. Unhealthy competition was described as the type of competition that created winners and losers and harmed quality, trust, or capacity.

This study included education leaders from the school choice/charter community and traditional public schools. There was a pragmatism within the common theme from education leaders that acknowledged some schools improved due to competition but that there were unintended consequences and collateral damage caused by Tiebout competition as a single strategy for improvement.

President Trump strongly supported vouchers and charter schools as a candidate with strong Tiebout competition rhetoric: “Competition. Always does it. The weak fall out and the strong get better. An amazing thing” (CBS News, 2016). In an Education Week commentary in June 2018, Secretary of Education DeVos described a trip abroad where she observed a faith-based education program that brought the arts into all subjects. She also described another faith-based program that used open-ended assessments and let students decide on their own long term projects. Secretary DeVos (2018) then stated:

Instead, forward-thinking states and school districts should take note of the effective approaches found abroad, and they should consider how they can extend educational freedom to their own constituents. States and school districts should empower families with more options to find the best fit for their children—whether through open enrollment, charter schools, tax-credit scholarships, vouchers, portable student funding, or other mechanisms.

President Trump’s statement nurtured the sense of winners and losers in Tiebout competition without addressing equity concerns raised by the accomplished education leaders. He did not describe what he meant about “the weak fall out” since underperforming students don’t fall out but need more intensive support. If he meant weak students drop out of school, that is an indication of a failure of an education improvement strategy. If he meant weak schools would close, there is the need for carefully investing to overcome the disruption of a school closing and to create a better school or better schooling options for those students.

Secretary of Education DeVos described effective teaching strategies that she observed in other countries as if those effective teaching strategies existed only within the school choice community. Her promotion of charter schools, voucher programs, and voucher-like programs despite the weak evidence that Tiebout competition alone is the key lever to improve public education was also divorced from a key strategy like a school improvement model that would improve quality, increase trust, and build capacity within a school. Unlike DeVos, there was not a single education leader within this study that had such strong unambiguous views that Tiebout competition alone would improve public education.

If U.S. policymakers used the same standards of evidence that the Gates Foundation used to abandon investing more in a \$575 million project that looked at teacher evaluation as the key lever to improve student outcomes, this study indicates accomplished U.S. education leaders would not recommend U.S. policymakers to further invest in Tiebout competition strategies that did not clearly mitigate equity concerns.

Policymakers may also benefit from exploring a theme from this study that the continued heated conflict between the school choice community and traditional public schools had a high cost in terms of trust, quality, and capacity that did not benefit students. This study included descriptions of the debate around Tiebout competition as a disheartening “charter/district hatred” and that has been compared to a religious war in the literature review. Unless there is new evidence that the division and conflict around Tiebout competition benefits disadvantaged students in meaningful ways, there is a need for more of the pragmatism that was evident in the accomplished education leaders in this study. Statements by education leaders within this study provide a pathway to heal the rift and build a more equitable, trusting, collaborative, and impactful public education system.

Tiebout competition alone does not provide evidence that there is an “invisible hand” that ensures equitable outcomes for rural or economically disadvantaged students. Improving the U.S. public education system requires visible hands that ensure equity and that are tightly linked with strategies that improve quality, increase trust, and build capacity. As policymakers craft policies to improve public education, the perspectives and experiences of accomplished education leaders can be some of the visible hands that will help improve education outcomes and ensure that all students receive a quality education.

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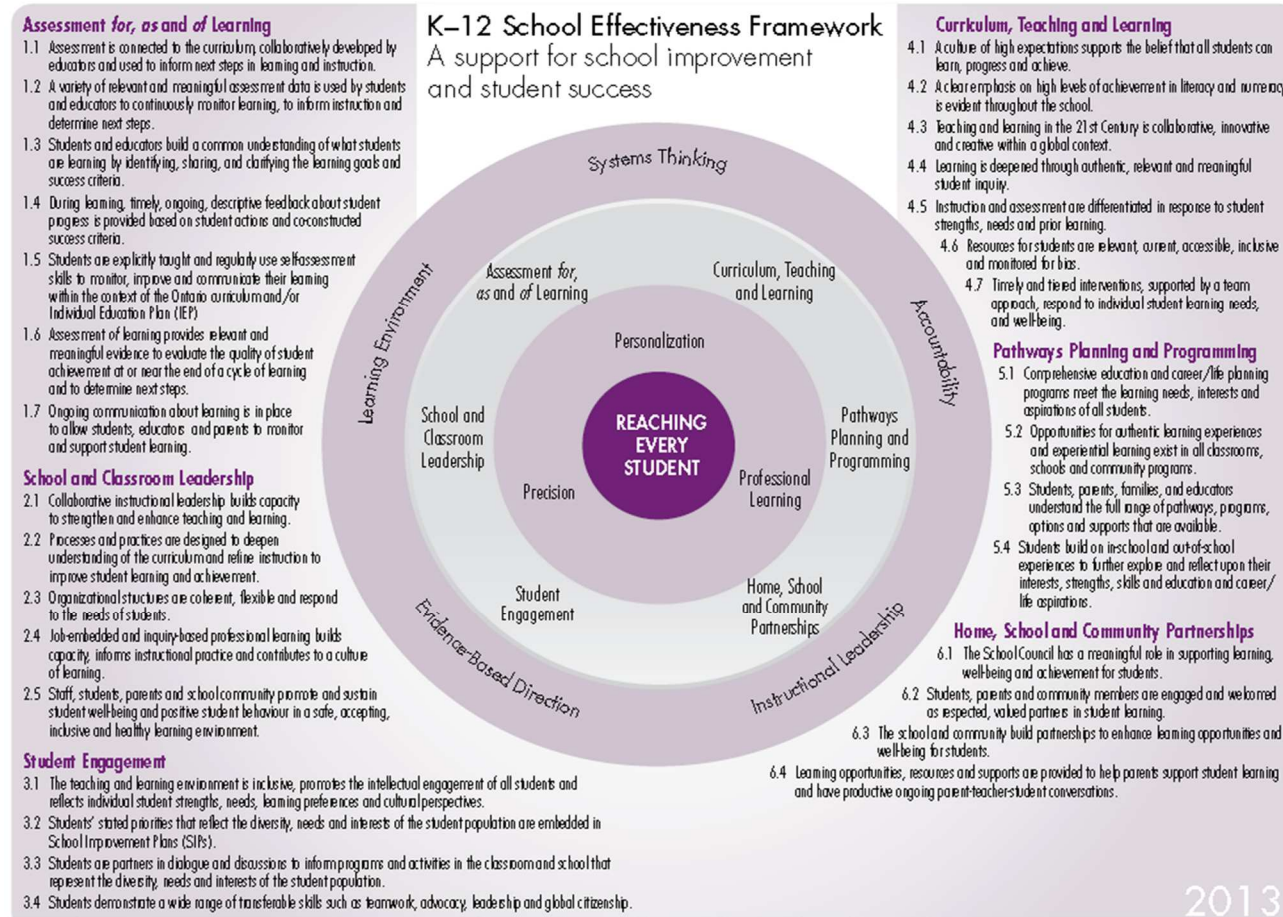
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Appendix A: Ontario K-12 School Effectiveness Framework



Appendix B: Education Leader Interview Guide

Participant Name

Participant Title

Date of Interview:

Interview Time and Interview Duration:

Confirm that Informed consent has been signed and received before interview.

Welcome and Introduction

Thank you for your time and your willingness to be interviewed today. I appreciate your willingness to share your educational experiences and perspective as an educational leader. This study examines how competition interacts with trust, capacity, and quality in public education. At multiple points in the interview, we will reference the one-page Ontario *K-12 School Effectiveness Framework* that I emailed you after you agreed to participate in the study and in the interview reminder email. (If interview is in-person, a copy of the framework will be handed to the participant). Do you have a copy of the Ontario *K-12 School Effectiveness Framework* with you now?

As outlined in the informed consent document, you may withdraw from this study at any time during the interview process or up to the completion of the study. If you choose not to participate, I'll destroy any notes and data collected in this interview. As you have chosen to participate in this study, the audio of this interview is being recorded. I will provide you with a written summary of this interview. Your interview will be confidential, and your name will not be used in the study. Do you have any questions?

Background

1. Briefly describe your career as an educator and an education leader.

Possible Prompts

- Years of experience and in what roles?
- Working in urban or rural schools?
- General demographic descriptions of students in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic status

Quality

2. Please describe in terms of policy, practice, or leadership what you believe to have the greatest impact on the quality of a school?

Possible Prompts:

- Please provide an example or story of how you have improved the quality of a school.
- Looking at the Ontario *K-12 Teaching Effectiveness Framework*, do you see areas where your example or story fits? If yes, where on the framework?
- How does your example, story, or key belief about how to improve quality in schools interact with competition?

Trust

3. Please describe in terms of policy, practice, or leadership what you believe to have the greatest impact on building trust within a school among students, staff, and parents of a school?

Possible Prompts

- Please provide an example or story of how you have built trust in a school in a way that improved the quality of the school.
- Looking at the Ontario *K-12 Teaching Effectiveness Framework*, do you see areas where your example or story fits? If yes, where on the framework?
- How does your example, story, or key belief about how to improve trust in schools interact with competition?

Capacity

4. Increasing capacity is a process of equipping a school with the skills or resources to more effectively meet the needs of students. Please describe in terms of policy, practice, or leadership what you believe to have the greatest impact on increasing the capacity of a school?

Possible Prompts

- Please provide an example or story of how you have improved the capacity of a school.
- Looking at the Ontario *K-12 Teaching Effectiveness Framework*, do you see areas where your example or story fits? If yes, where on the framework?
- How does your example, story, or key belief about how to improve quality in schools interact with competition?

Competition

5. Please describe in terms of policy, practice, or leadership what you believe to be the impacts of competition between or within schools?

Possible Prompts

- Please provide an example or story of how you have used competition to improve the quality of a school?
- What examples or stories can you share where competition has impacted the quality of a school?
- Looking at the Ontario *K-12 Teaching Effectiveness Framework*, do you see areas where your example or story fits? If yes, where on the framework?
- What is your overall assessment of the value of competition as a mechanism to improve public schools?
- One theory about competition in education is that schools will be forced to improve if they are competing for students due to families having additional schooling options such as charter schools or vouchers to attend private schools. Please share a story, experience, example or your perspective on how schools have changed when facing competition.
- One assumption is that families are selecting schools based on the quality of the school. Please share an example, story, experience, or your perspective that shows why families select a school and the main factors that went into that decision.

Opportunities to Add to Previous Comments

6. Is there anything else you would like to share about quality, trust, capacity, or competition?

Closing

I would like to thank you for your willingness to participate in this study and for your time today. Your willingness to participate and the thoughtfulness of your responses today are crucial to this study. I will email you a summary of your interview. I would like to confirm that I have your most current contact information. In case you have any further questions, here is my contact information.

Appendix: Accomplished Leader Quality Stories and Effect of Competition

Quality experiences	Competition effects
Improving education and behavior outcomes at a school by improving ELA instructional practices and increasing teacher presence and engagement with students in the hallways.	Positive. A general drive to compete and to be the best teacher, the best department and the best school.
Building routines, structures, and community when district moved Grade 6 from 9 separate elementary schools to one middle school.	Negative. Competition was an obstacle to be overcome. There was competition between veteran middle school teachers and 6 th grade teachers from the elementary schools over routines and structures.
Improving instructional practice by building cohorts of teachers within the school to become National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT).	Minimal. Slight pay incentive for achieving National Board Certification. Comparing number of NBCTs to a rival school was a light-hearted strategy to persuade more teachers to join cohort.
Improving communication and relationships between parents and teachers by persistence and flexibility to have extremely high rates of parent participation in parent conferences.	Negative. Competition didn't fit with the collaborative, focused, persistent process to strengthen collaboration with parents.
Dramatically increased school's Advanced Placement (AP) performance from less than 10% to consistently above 70% through higher expectations, deeper content knowledge, collaboration, and increasing student engagement.	Minimal. The moral imperative for equitable outcomes for high-poverty students was much stronger than the mild desire to outperform the previous teacher.
Increased performance for students with disabilities by building strong teacher teams that were collaborative and accountable with higher degrees of autonomy.	Minimal. Collaboration, commitment, and accountability to one another were driving force. Efforts to decrease competition between students by not having students ranked by GPA.

Increased student reading and literacy performance through collaborative school – home literacy partnership program.	Negative in implementation. Program success was based on collaboration. Some competition for funds between teachers and with school district.
Building a strong committed team of teachers that was collaborative with peer observation and accountable to each other.	Positive. Peer observation increased and removal of ineffective teachers made accountability meaningful.
Increased performance and leadership through high quality case-based professional development for teams of teachers.	None. Collaboration based on interest and need. Competition did not come into play.
Decreased failure rates and increased student learning for high-risk youth with a flexible and focused Response To Intervention (RtI) program.	Negative. Competition for teacher time and resources by parents of higher influence led to the successful RtI program being dropped.
Improved student outcomes through a collaborative focused effort to improve instructional coaching.	Minimal. 90% collaborative and 10% competitive. Trusting relationships focused on improving practice.
Built a stronger learning community by taking teachers working in isolation and creating collaborative teacher teams that increased student opportunities.	Minimal. Team community was collaborative. Efforts to decrease and minimize the effects of competition between students.
Increased student outcomes by supporting and holding teacher leaders accountable for student results for small clusters of teachers. Focus was on aligned assessments, curriculum, and instruction.	Positive. Team leaders received higher compensation and lost leadership positions if student team performance did not improve.
Increased student performance on writing by creating a well-supported, collaborative, district-wide student writing portfolio system.	Minimal. Collaboration, strong feedback loops to implementation concerns, and persistent support drove success.
Built a supportive, empathetic sense of community with staff in students in	None. Competition was the antithesis of the collaboration that made the programs successful.

response to racial tension and isolation of
LGBTQ youth.
