

Leaders' Transitions: Experiences of Four Directors of Education during School Division
Restructuring in Rural Saskatchewan

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to build an understanding of the transitional experiences of four Directors of Education who led school division restructuring initiatives in rural Saskatchewan. The data regarding the participants' experiences were collected through participant observation, a survey, and a series of three interviews in which the participants were asked to describe their transitional experiences. Additionally, an interview with a member of the Restructuring Coordinating Committee and a process of document analysis provided further information about the restructuring initiative in which the Directors were involved.

The conceptual framework for this study included the work of several researchers who had previously focused on transitions. It included the concept that transitions took place in three non-linear stages: the ending, the neutral zone, and the beginning. Additionally, the conceptual framework reflected the belief that transitions are influenced by the individual's personal circumstances. This study added to the collective knowledge of change leadership as it chronicled the lived experiences of leaders who went through personal transitions while in the process of leading change and managing the transitions of employees within their organization.

This study utilized a multiple case study design to explore the transitional experiences of educational leaders, charged with the task of leading organizational restructuring. Participants included four Directors of Education from rural Saskatchewan school divisions that were involved in the January 2006 provincial restructuring initiative.

The data analysis resulted in three understandings: a) Variations in personal circumstances have a significant impact on the way that individuals experience transitions.

b) Relationship building is a key component of the transition process. c) The leader must first negotiate interpersonal relationships and then focus on repatterning processes and building relationships within the organization.

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DEDICATION

For my Family,

Mom, throughout this journey I have often needed to draw upon your unwavering love and support. You were always on the other end of the phone prepared to bring me back down to earth or to pick me up off the floor.

Dad, you taught all four of us to understand the value of education. I wish you could be here to celebrate this educational accomplishment with me.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The purpose of this multiple case study was to build an understanding of the transitional experiences of four Directors of Education during the 2006 provincially initiated restructuring of all rural school divisions in Saskatchewan. These leaders were required to design, direct, and manage the organizational change. While doing so, like all individuals within the newly restructured school divisions, the four Directors experienced transitions as they personally adapted to their new environments. This study chronicled the lived experiences of those Directors to develop a deeper understanding of leaders' transitions while in the process of leading change and managing the transitions of other employees within the organization.

Research Questions

The purpose of the study was addressed through the following research questions:

1. How did the Directors of Education, as the leaders of their school divisions, experience the transitions associated with organizational restructuring?
2. What contextual factors influenced the transitional experiences of Directors of Education in rural school divisions during the restructuring initiative?
3. What strategies did the four Directors of Education use to cope with their transitional experiences during organizational restructuring?

Importance of the Study

We live in a world of fast paced change—the catalyst for transitions. Therefore, it is important to develop leaders who are capable of leading not only the organization through structural changes, but also, the people through the transitional experiences associated with organizational change. Often, if not always, leaders will be expected to lead change and manage the transitions of others while in the midst of their own personal transitions. The detailed accounts of leaders' transitional experiences that were compiled in this study developed my understanding of some of the common challenges and some of the unique obstacles that the four Directors of Education faced during the restructuring process.

The educational restructuring literature has been conducted primarily from a macro perspective to determine the potential risks and benefits for the school system. Canadian research (e.g. Trider, 1999; Gregg, 2003; Williams, 2003), and specifically the research conducted in Saskatchewan (SSTA, 1993; Langlois & Scharf, 1991; Wionzek, 1995), addressed the likelihood that school systems could improve efficiency and accountability by restructuring. A majority of the restructuring research conducted recently in the United States (US) served to strengthen the political position of those opposed to school district consolidation (Duncombe & Yinger, 2005; Johnson, 2006; Bard, Gardener, & Wieland, 2005). This study added the depth of individual perspectives to the collective knowledge of educational restructuring by focusing on the lived experiences of four educational leaders.

Characteristically, the change leadership discourse has focused primarily on how leaders 'should lead during change'. For example, Fullan (2001) suggested that leading

with moral purpose, promoting an understanding of change, building relationships, aiding knowledge creation and sharing, and facilitating coherence making helps leaders to ensure both internal and external commitment from members of their work teams. Similar to Fullan (2001), both Kouzes and Posner (1997) and Bass and Avolio (1994) identified characteristics for leadership behaviour that would assist leaders in successfully leading their organizations. While it is important to simplify the complexity of leading during change and to identify some trustworthy techniques for successful change leadership, it is also important to understand the intricacy of the human experience of leading change. This study made an important contribution to the change leadership literature by collecting and reporting the experiences of leaders who are involved in leading school division restructuring initiatives.

Leading researchers within the area of transitions have developed an understanding of individual transitions as an important part of the change process (Bridges, 2004; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995; Woodward and Buchholz 1997) and considered how leaders could manage the transitions of their subordinates (Bridges, 2001). Both Van Maanen and Schein (1977) and Nicholson (1984) studied the phenomenon of employees' transitions to new work roles. A study conducted in 2003 by Goldring, Crowson, Laird, and Berk observed school leaders as they lead their schools through a significant policy shift. Although they identified the challenges posed by the transitions, their focus was on understanding transition leadership rather than on understanding the transitional experiences. With the exception of the studies conducted by Davidson (2006), and Carrite (2006), little work had been undertaken in the area of leaders' transitions, especially with in the field of education. Therefore, this study made

an important contribution to the transitions literature because it focused on the transitions of leaders in the field of education.

For educational leaders, experiencing other restructuring initiatives in the educational sector, and for those studying in the area of educational administration, this study provides examples of transitional experiences of leaders that were instigated by organizational restructuring in the field. It is a valuable resource as it makes significant connections between the current research in the field and the life experiences of the participants. It makes the connection between common elements and it highlights unique experiences. As a result, it provides readers with an understanding of both the probabilities and the possibilities within a range of transitional experiences. Additionally, this study is important because it recognizes the leader as an individual within the organization and in so doing builds an understanding of the person who is cast into the role of the leader. It is imperative that the people within an organization understand and accept leaders as individuals with unique characteristics who are affected by organizational change.

Historical Context for the Study

School Division Restructuring in Saskatchewan Prior to 1990

The history of education in Saskatchewan prior to 1990, as reported by Langlois and Scharf (1991), shows a fairly consistent movement towards consolidating schools and school divisions: “Even with the passing of the first legislation dealing with secondary education, it was clear that the central authority saw the need for consolidation of schools” (Langlois & Scharf, 1991, pp. 127-128). *The School Ordinance* of 1901 offered grant money as an incentive to encourage the establishment of high school

classrooms with higher enrollments. *The School Act* of 1912 allowed for the formation of consolidated school districts and offered an additional grant for conveyance costs to bring students to the school. In 1917 the government conducted a study of the organization of schools in the province. When his report was published in 1918, he recommended reorganizing the existing Boards of education into municipal school districts. This would have reduced the 4075 school districts to 300 municipal school districts. A report compiled by N.L. Reid in 1933, suggested that the equalization of the tax burden could only be achieved through the creation of larger school administrative units. In 1936 another report urged for the consolidation of schools and busing of students to larger centres (Langlois & Scharf, 1993).

In the 1940s in response to the various reports and to the pressure from teachers in the province, the Government of Saskatchewan introduced *The Larger School Units Act* (Lloyd, 1979). Trustees and local government authorities opposed a reduction in the number of school districts. “The Press took up the case [against the passing of the act]...and called for a plebiscite to be taken on the question” (Lloyd, 1979, p. 66). Minister of Education, W. S. Lloyd, implored the government to hold firm on its plans but in response to the public pressure they agreed to include a clause which stated that:

a petition signed by 15% of the ratepayers in any given municipality could call for a vote before the establishment of a Larger School Unit in their area.

Alternatively, a similar number of ratepayers could ask for a vote after the Unit had been in existence for a period of five years. (Lloyd, 1979, p. 66)

Despite the political opposition, in 1944 the *Larger School Units Act* was passed. Those who tried to circulate a petition against the formation of larger school units failed to

gather 15% of the names in the area and therefore, no votes were held on the issue. The act allowed for the establishment of larger school units which included approximately 80 of the former school districts. Years later, W. S. Lloyd made the following comments during an interview:

What we needed was an educational area with an adequate financial base and an adequate population base. We wanted enough to permit the possibility of planning and putting into operation a program that covered grades one to twelve, with a broadening of the offerings at the high school level. It was claimed by us that it was better to distribute educational costs and educational benefits....We were asking for changes in education that the small school district just couldn't supply. The larger unit would use the resources of money, the resources of staff and the resources of the local leadership as well. (W. S. Lloyd as quoted in Lloyd, 1979, p. 69)

The arguments that he made in favour of school division restructuring are surprisingly similar to points made by proponents of the Education Equity Initiative in the province today as evidenced by the conclusions put forward in *Finding the Balance: The final report of the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education* (Boughen, 2003).

School Division Restructuring in Saskatchewan 1990 to 2003

Both the Langlois and Scharf *School Finance and Governance Review* of 1991 and *The Task Force of Educational Governance Report* commissioned by the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association (SSTA) in 1993 called for a reduction in the number of school divisions in the province. The first amalgamation of school divisions

following the publishing of these two reports took place on January 1, 1994. “Four small school divisions (Balcarres, Grenfell, Wolseley and Valleyview) amalgamated to form the Scenic Valley School Division. All four of the smaller divisions disestablished and joined to create the new division” (Saskatchewan Education, 1997, p. 11). Additionally in 1994, Saskatchewan Education supported three pilot projects in which school divisions agreed to experiment with sharing administrative services. “On January 1, 1997, Blaine Lake School Division disestablished. A portion of the school division joined the Battlefords School Division while the remainder amalgamated with the Saskatchewan Valley School Division” (Saskatchewan Education, 1997, p. 11). Several other Boards voluntarily agreed to amalgamate between 1997 and 2002.

At that time, Saskatchewan Education was concerned that the move to larger school divisions was progressing too slowly and decided to offer an incentive for Boards that were willing to amalgamate. *Restructuring Bulletin No. 10* prepared in 2002 offered a monetary incentive for Boards that were willing to engage in amalgamation:

- Saskatchewan Education will provide one-time special grants to eligible school divisions in recognition and support of amalgamation/restructuring initiatives. This policy is in effect only for those amalgamation/restructuring initiatives completed by the October 2003 Local Elections.

- Consideration Support - \$7500
- Amalgamation/Restructuring Transition Assistance – maximum \$450,000
- Early Commitment Support - \$15,000

- Amalgamation and restructuring are the only initiatives for which school divisions can request Restructuring Financial Supports.
- Restructuring Supports are only available to school divisions in existence as of January 1, 2002. (Saskatchewan Education, February 2002, p. 1)

To determine the success of the incentive, the government had set “a goal of reducing the number of school divisions by 25 percent (25 school divisions) prior to the Board elections in October 2003” (Education Equity Task Force, 2004, p. 9). Many school divisions co-operated and by October 2003 the number of school divisions had been reduced by 18 percent. Although government officials were pleased with the progress, it fell short of their goal. They made the decision to conduct a study on financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 education before deciding how to proceed with the initiative. When *Finding the Balance: The final report of the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 education* (Boughen, 2003) was released, it indicated a need for further amalgamation of school divisions in rural Saskatchewan and the government at the time responded by announcing a restructuring of all rural school divisions to take effect January 1, 2006.

Although education in Saskatchewan had a long history of amalgamation, the announcement of a provincially mandated restructuring process provoked feelings of uncertainty for many people, like me, who were working within one of the recently amalgamated school divisions in rural Saskatchewan. The next section describes my personal background and illustrates my connections to the topics under investigation in this study.

Researcher's Personal Background

Choosing a research topic in the area of rural education was a natural fit for me. I grew up on a farm five and a half miles outside of a small Saskatchewan village with a population of approximately 300 people. From kindergarten until grade nine, I rode the bus for half an hour in the morning and again at night to attend the school in our community. When I started high school, I was bused, along with my classmates, to the next town eight miles down the road. I have lived the experience of rural education and I understand intrinsically what it means to the communities and the people of rural Saskatchewan.

When I graduated from high school, I came to the University of Saskatchewan to pursue a degree in Education. I could not wait to go back to small town Saskatchewan and start my career. My first position was in a kindergarten, grade one, and two classroom in a school that had a student population of 81 in kindergarten to grade twelve. There were 21 students in my class. It was a challenging position. I struggled with the lack of resources and the wide spectrum of ability and maturity within my classroom.

When I left that job, I moved on to Alberta and British Columbia and broadened my teaching experience to include both urban and private schools. When I returned to rural Saskatchewan, I was a seasoned middle-years teacher. I became the principal in a school that hosted approximately 120 students in grades seven to twelve. I remember the feeling that I had that first year that I was back in Saskatchewan. I understood the people of rural Saskatchewan and their desire to maintain viability within their small communities. I was at home.

Before I left the principalship, the process of amalgamation had begun. Our school division had accepted an incentive from Saskatchewan Learning¹ to voluntarily amalgamate with two other school divisions. The size of the school division would increase the tax base. We would have an opportunity to share resources throughout that region of the province. I was excited about the possibilities and I wanted to get involved in the changes. When there was an opportunity to represent the administrators' group on the restructuring team, I volunteered enthusiastically. Once the dust had settled and the terms of the agreement were worked out, there were several new positions open at central office. I applied and was selected as the Enhancing School Capacity Coordinator which essentially meant that I was in charge of the School^{PLUS} portfolio. The major focus of my position became assisting schools to assess their needs and to build capacity with the cooperation of their communities. We formed community councils. We conducted surveys and focus group discussions. We used the data to set goals and we embarked on projects that brought the communities in to help the school. It was exciting. It was growth from the grassroots.

In addition to my “formal” position, my colleagues and I at the division office were expected to take a role in leading the school division in building an organizational

¹ In November 2007 the Government of Saskatchewan chose to change the name of the provincial department of education from Saskatchewan Learning to the Ministry of Education. Since the department of education was referred to as Saskatchewan Learning throughout the course of the restructuring initiative and the data collection phase of this study, I have chosen to use Saskatchewan Learning to refer to the provincial department of education throughout this document.

culture. We made plans for bringing the schools together and strategized about how the new organization would begin to take shape. During the first year of our amalgamation, we heard rumors that Saskatchewan Learning was going to announce a mandatory amalgamation. We hoped that it would not include our newly amalgamated school division because we were just getting started. By November 2004, it was official. Our new school division would be closing. We were just beginning to see the development of an organizational culture. We were just getting to know each other and the end was certain. I was heartbroken.

I gained considerable experience in leadership and change during that period of amalgamation. We constructed school division policy; we learned the ways of three different organizations; and we tried our hands at merging the cultures into one. It was the kind of learning experience that was life-changing as a leader. I understood first hand how hard it was to leave that old organization behind. I consistently wanted to default to the way we had done things before. I wanted to convince everyone that our way had been the best way. In retrospect, I realized that the process of working through the uncertainties helped us to create a new culture that would have grown to be strong and vibrant just like the old one. I have experienced amalgamation and I understand some of the challenges associated with both the external changes and the internal transitions.

Definition of Terms

The following terminology is used throughout the course of this study:

Change. It is vital for this study to develop a definitive distinction between *change* and *transition*. Bridges (2003) stated that “change is situational: the move to a new site, the retirement of the founder, the reorganization of the roles on a team, the

revisions to a pension plan” (p. 3). Change, therefore, is external. It takes place in the physical, contextual, or situational realm of the organization.

Transitions. Transitions are an individual’s personal response to change in his or her environment. Each transition represents “a three-phase process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about” (Bridges, 2003, p.3). The three phase transition starts with the *ending* of the previous context, moves into a period of time that Bridges (2003) calls the *neutral zone*, and ends when the new *beginning* is complete. Bridges (2003) cautions the reader to remember that transitions should not be considered to be linear processes that move sequentially through the three phases but rather that there are elements of the ending, the neutral zone, and the beginning present throughout the transition process. In this study, transitions will often be referred to in the plural form with an understanding that within the course of organizational change an individual leader will experience a variety of personal and professional transitions.

School Division. *The Education Act* (1995) defines a school division as “any portion of Saskatchewan that is designated pursuant to this Act to be the unit for local governance of schools and for the provision and administration of educational services in those schools” (p. 24).

Director of Education. Within the Saskatchewan Context, the term Director of Education refers to the individual who fulfills the role of Chief Executive Officer of the school division. This individual is the formal leader of the school division and reports directly to the Board of Education.

Leader. Hershey, Blanchard, and Johnson (1996) define leadership as a “process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal achievement in a given situation” (p. 91). Therefore, the leader is the individual who influences the group of people towards the achievement of the goal. Although given this definition it is obvious that leaders appear in all parts of an organization and need not be named by a formal title, in the case of this study, leader will be used to refer to the Director of Education.

Restructuring. In the Saskatchewan context, restructuring is a term that has been commonly used to refer to the provincially mandated school division amalgamations which were announced by Saskatchewan Learning in November of 2004 and which became a reality within the province on January 1st, 2006. Through this provincial initiative the number of school divisions in the province was reduced from eighty-one to twenty-eight.

Assumptions

It is important to outline the assumptions that are inherent within the selected methodology. Stating these assumptions precisely will help to clarify the expectations both for the reader and for the researcher. In this study, I used a multiple case study design (Yin, 1998) to study the transitional experiences of school division administrators following an organizational restructuring process.

The success of case study research is dependent upon the researcher’s ability to develop a detailed understanding of the specific case. In this study, I used interviews, participant observations, and a survey to collect the experiential reflections of four Directors of Education who had recently led their school divisions through wide-scale

restructuring processes. This study assumed that the stories that the Directors of Education shared with me would be an appropriate medium through which I could interpret their transitional experiences. This assumption was based on the belief that human beings and their stories are intertwined (Shabani Varaki, 2007). Shabani Varaki (2007) explained that humans live storied lives. “These storied lives are both individual and social. In studying these stories, a researcher is actually studying the way in which humans live and experience their world” (§ 17).

This study assumed that the cases provided information about the common transitional experiences of leaders who are called upon to lead wide-scale change. As a result, I assumed that when I investigated each of the cases, I would be able to see specific connections to the current literature, to my conceptual framework, and to the other cases. The connections that were made between the cases, the literature, and the conceptual framework provided an illustration of some of the common experiences of leaders in transition.

Additionally, the study assumed that each of the cases would be unique and therefore would also provide some illustration of the possible spectrum of experiences. Although individuals often report similar experiences, individual differences and variance in contextual situations leads each person to experience similar occurrences in unique ways. The unique perspectives of the four participants provided a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of the transitions of leaders.

More generally, the study assumed that the knowledge that was developed through the analysis of the four cases provided sufficient information with which to make adjustments to the conceptual framework for the study. The conceptual framework was

developed originally through a synthesis of the literature. Therefore, changes in the conceptual framework represent an addition to the literature and a deeper understanding of leaders' experiences with transitions.

Finally, I assumed that the readers, even though they may come from a variety of backgrounds, will find that they can relate to the storied life experiences of the Directors of Education. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested that lived experiences were “important when they [became] texts read by others, not so much for the knowledge they contain, but for the vicarious testing of life possibilities by the readers of the research” (p. 42). This expected resonance will enable others to learn from the transitional experiences of the participants of this study.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study emerged from my personal interest in topics related to transitions, from the decisions that I made in defining the research questions, from the practical boundaries that I set to focus the scope of the study, and also from the issues on which I chose not to concentrate. The research questions evolved from my interest in organizational change. I was curious about how restructuring, leadership, and transitions related to each other within the context of the experiences of individual leaders of change. Therefore, I selected the Directors of Education who were leading their school divisions through restructuring as the central focus of my study and I made the decision to concentrate exclusively on their transitions. Although I recognized that transitions are a phenomenon experienced by all stakeholders who are involved in a change event, this study was delimited to the transitions of the leaders themselves. From the point at which the research questions were established, the remaining decisions

depended on collecting appropriate data to answer those questions. Therefore, my focus was on learning about the transitional experiences of the Directors of Education, the contexts within which their transitions took place, and the strategies that the Directors used to cope with the transitions. This study was delimited to data that would help me to understand or interpret the research questions.

The restructuring event that provided the context for this study was a provincially mandated rural school division amalgamation process. It did not include Saskatchewan's urban school divisions. I opted to delimit the study to include only Directors of Education who were directly affected by the provincial mandate. Therefore, the study did not include the transitional experiences of the research participants during previous amalgamations and it did not include Directors of the Catholic school Boards that amalgamated voluntarily during the same time period.

The time period delimited by the scope of this study was from the time the map was announced by Saskatchewan Learning in November 2004 until the Directors were interviewed in October 2007. The Directors in this study noted that their transitions were not yet complete by October 2007. However, they were able to reflect upon their initial reactions, their current perspectives, and the phases in between.

I decided to consider each Director's transitional experiences as a separate case and sought volunteers from the population of all of the Directors of Education currently serving within the twelve restructured school divisions. Therefore, my study was delimited to the specific experiences of the individuals who volunteered. Additionally, I chose to focus on the lived experiences of the Directors of Education and as a result I

decided not to include the perspectives of individuals who may have worked closely with the Directors during the change process.

Although I am intensely interested in how leaders' transitions affect leadership during change, I decided not to address that question in this study. Furthermore, I recognize that transitions, an individual's response to change in the environment, are processed psychologically. However, based on my specific research questions and on my personal interests in organizational change, I elected to focus on the experiences of the individual within the context of organizational change rather than to focus on the psychological processes associated with transitions. Additionally, with the intent of choosing a clear focus I chose not to include a variety of other aspects of transitions. For example, I chose not to concentrate on the challenges associated with shifting organizational cultures, on the development of workplace identity within the context of a change environment, on the losses associated with the ending of the previous systemic structure, or on the opportunities for organizational learning during change. I also chose not to investigate how the different leadership styles of the four primary participants affected their transitions or how gender differences among the participants led to variations in their experiences. Although each of those topics are related to this study, my research questions, my personal interests, the themes that emerged from my literature review, and the topics raised by the participants, did not necessitate an intense focus on those issues.

Limitations

In this study, the personal experiences of the individual Directors were different from one another as a result of their different personal situations. Organizational change

does not happen in a vacuum. Leaders are subject to all of the ups and downs of life in addition to their roles at work. Families and friends, living arrangements, financial commitments, and stress all play a role in how individuals approach their work situations. These differences made each participant's transitional experiences with the restructuring process unique. Furthermore, the Directors of Education are a group of people who are highly involved in the business of their school divisions and I collected the data during a time when they were still engaged in the transitions associated with change. Therefore, the results of the study were limited by the amount of time that the participants were able to spend with me. The results were also limited by the small number of participants. Although their experiences reflect on a common experience, it is possible that similarities between research participants in this study happened purely as a result of coincidence.

The results of the study are limited by individual differences between the interview participants. The way that the individual chose to retell his or her story, the details that he or she focused upon, and the comfort that he or she had with relating personal details impacted my understanding of each person's experiences. Therefore, the results of this study are limited to the depth of the data that were collected and the opportunities to recognize both similarities and differences within the stories.

The findings were limited by my own ability to adopt the perspectives of the participants and reflect their experiences accurately. My prior experiences with amalgamation and my personal experiences in educational leadership limited my ability to be the 'tabula rasa' or blank slate upon which the stories were written. I strove to listen to their voices, approached the situation with flexibility and open-mindedness, and invited participants to assist in revising the cases.

Additionally, the results are somewhat limited by the fact that the participants were volunteers. The group of Directors who volunteered may have characteristics that are similar to each other but different from the rest of the population. Consequently, the results might represent the group of Directors who were willing to volunteer rather than the entire population of Directors who led restructuring initiatives.

Finally, the results were limited to the context of this study. Although the results were not generalizable beyond the scope of the study, the rich descriptive stories that were related by the Directors of Education provided an opportunity for readers to make connections between the experiences of the four participants to their own transitional experiences. Additionally, these cases presented four accounts of how the phenomenon of transitions was experienced by these Directors.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the topic, the context, the researcher, and the study. Chapter 2 explores the pertinent literature and clarifies the conceptual framework. Chapter 3 explains the methodology that was employed to collect and analyze the data for the study. Chapter 4 presents the four cases and Chapter 5 investigates and discusses both the unique and the common elements of the four cases as they relate to the current literature in the area and to the conceptual framework for the study.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Although very little research conducted prior to this study focused on the topic of the transitional experiences of educational leaders or leaders in general, there was a significant amount of literature that informed the study in the related areas of restructuring, leadership, change, and transitions. This study fulfilled a need for more research in three areas: educational restructuring, change leadership and transitions. The literature review provided information about prior research and established the need for the study.

Chapter 2 describes the literature that was reviewed and illustrates how the study fit into the current discourse. The final section of this chapter illustrates how the transitions literature was synthesized to create the conceptual framework that helped me to understand the transitional experiences of the four Directors of Education.

School Division Restructuring

Since 1995 every Canadian province has experienced provincially mandated rural school division restructuring (Pierce, 2003, p. 47). Saskatchewan was the last of the ten provinces to undertake the provincial restructuring of educational governance (Pierce, 2003, p. 47). The research that was conducted in this area, most of which has been completed in the United States (US), focused on finances, school closure, student achievement, small schools, and community losses. Research conducted in Canada (e.g. Trider, 1999; Gregg, 2003; Williams, 2003), and specifically in Saskatchewan (SSTA, 1993; Langlois & Scharf, 1991; Wionzek, 1995), addressed the likelihood that improved efficiency and accountability would be achieved through restructuring initiatives. With

the exception of Trider's (1999) paper which was presented to the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting in Montreal, the research that has been conducted in the area of educational restructuring has been conducted from a macro perspective. In addition to knowing how school division restructuring affects an organization, it is important to understand how individuals experience educational restructuring. This study made an important step towards filling that gap in the literature by recording the experiences of four educational leaders who were directly involved with the 2006 rural school division restructuring initiative in Saskatchewan.

The polarization of the issue of school district consolidation by the advocates and the adversaries of the movement was notable in the US literature (Bard, Gardener, & Wieland, 2005). A series of studies were conducted by those who opposed consolidation with the intention to prove that there would be no cost savings from consolidation (Rural School and Community Trust, 2006; Duncombe & Yinger, 2005). Johnson (2006) pointed out that school district consolidation is firmly linked to school closures, primarily small schools in relatively low socio-economic areas. Additionally, several studies supported the concept that small schools report higher student achievement and more supportive communities (Buchanan, 2004; Johnson, 2006; Rural School and Community Trust, 2006). The claim was that schools in small communities are the cultural centers of the community (Rural School and Community Trust, 2006) and once the school is closed the community is also reduced (Buchanan, 2004; Fleming, 1997; Bard et al. 2005; Trider, 1999; Richard, 2004; Williams, 2003). Furthermore, Bard et al. (2005) stated that "after school closure, out migration, population decline, and neighborhood deterioration are set in motion, support for public education diminishes" (summary). Brasington (1998)

established a link between the drop in academic achievement experienced by students, who have had their small schools closed, and house prices in their neighborhoods. He asserted that although the community saves money due to improved internal efficiencies, they lose it in other places as a result.

In Canada, the school division restructuring research consisted of two types: reflective studies that reviewed the process that was undertaken to restructure the educational system, or projective studies that suggested gains that could be realized through a system-wide amalgamation. The former studies had relevance to my study as they addressed the challenges associated with the transitional period (Trider, 1999; Gregg, 2003; Williams, 2003). Trider (1999) used an airplane analogy to describe his lasting impression of the difficulties. “While the turbulence may subside to allow the flight attendants to resume service, I suggest that it will never allow us to undo our seatbelts” (p. 13). Four of the studies that projected success for restructuring initiatives were conducted in Saskatchewan (Boughen, 2003; SSTA, 1993; Langlois & Scharf, 1991; Wionzek, 1995). Those studies agreed that within the Saskatchewan context that efficiency could be realized through a reduction in the number of school divisions.

The prior research has established worthy arguments both in favor of amalgamation and opposed to amalgamation. However, in this quest to understand the pros and cons of restructuring from the perspective of the organization, researchers have neglected to record the voices of individuals who have experienced school division restructuring. This study builds on the educational restructuring literature by recording, comparing, and sharing the stories and the insights of four educational leaders who led their school divisions through a restructuring initiative in rural Saskatchewan.

To understand how leaders experience change, it was important to understand leadership in general and change leadership specifically. The next section reviews the literature in the areas of leadership and change leadership and it illustrates how this study adds to the current discourse in those areas.

Leadership

Much of the leadership literature focused on defining the qualities of a successful leader (Kouzes & Posner, 1997; Bass & Avolio, 1994) or on identifying successful leadership behaviours (Fullan, 2001; Kotter, 1997). Conversely, very little of the research and writing about leadership has reflected on the life experiences of individuals who are cast into leadership roles. Within the more specific area of change leadership, the trend continues. The literature pointed out the critical role that leaders play during organizational change events both in designing the changes that initiate transitions and in managing the transitions of their employees. However, except for a small body of work conducted primarily by Ph.D. students (e.g. Davidson, 2006; Manderscheid, 2006; Carrite 2000), it has failed to make the connection that the leader is also an individual who is affected by change and required to make the necessary transitions to adjust. Although it was beyond the boundaries of this study to describe the impact that the leaders' transitions had on their leadership, I believe that the first step towards understanding how leaders' transitions impact leadership is to understand how leaders experience transitions. Consequently, this study found a place within the leadership literature because it chronicled the transitional experiences of four educational leaders during a wide-scale change initiative in their organizations.

The leadership section of the literature review outlines several characteristics that experts agree are critical to the role of the leader. It explains transformational leadership and educational leadership within the context of the Saskatchewan education system. The final part of the section focuses specifically on change leadership.

The study of leaders and leadership has been documented throughout history and is a universal phenomenon both within humankind and within many animal species (Bass, 1997). Understanding exactly what comprises leadership is critical to understanding the challenges that were faced by the leaders in transition within the rural Saskatchewan school divisions. An examination of the literature suggests that there is consensus among researchers that there are several standard components of leadership. Kotter (1997) pointed out that “leadership...is about coping with change” (p. 25). The idea of change being the primary function of leadership was supported throughout the literature (Hershey et al., 1996; Rost, 1993; Fullan, 2001; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Leadership also entails forming and communicating a shared vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Kotter, 1997; Hershey et al., 1996; Rost, 1993). A leader must motivate, influence, and/or encourage followers to work towards the achievement of common goals (Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Kotter, 1997; Hershey et al., 1996; Rost, 1993). Finally, leaders must focus on relationships (Jaworski, 1996; Fullan, 2001; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

In addition to those general leadership guidelines, a large section of the recent literature in the area of leadership suggests that leaders need to be transformational. In his work on transformational leadership, Bass (1997) stated that leaders can accomplish more than they thought possible “when [they] broaden and elevate the interest of their employees, when they generate awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of

the group, and when they stir their employees to look beyond their own self-interest for the good of the group” (p. 320). In 2002, Avolio and Bass noted that transformational leaders exhibit four common components of leadership behaviour. First, they are good role models for their followers. Secondly, transformational leaders find ways to inspire followers by making the work both meaningful and challenging. Third, these leaders provide intellectual stimulation and encourage innovation and creativity by questioning assumptions, reframing problems, and approaching old situations in new ways. And finally, these transformational leaders pay special attention to the individual needs of their followers (pp. 2-3).

In a presentation to the Saskatchewan League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents (LEADS) in March of 2007, Walker proposed a heuristic to represent the leadership role that LEADS members, including the Directors of Education, play within the province. Through the use of the heuristic Walker (2007) suggested that LEADS members play 16 valuable roles in the education system. The heuristic included such roles as, diligent network and team builders, tri-level and trans-organizational leaders, purveyors of warranted hope, and cultivators of constructive learning communities (p. 54). He encouraged LEADS members to achieve those roles by adopting six core commitments of leadership: voice of personal conscience, professional conviction, professional constraint, common ethical principles, moral imagination, and relational reciprocity (p. 41). Walker (2007) made it clear that the expectations the province had for these educational leaders of the restructuring initiative were substantial. Understanding these expectations was important to understanding the leadership roles of the four Directors of Education who participated in this study.

Researchers who have written in the area of leadership exposed the diverse and complex nature of leadership. They challenged leaders to rise above themselves, to maintain a vision for the greater good, and to focus outwards rather than inwards. Additionally, the authors of the leadership literature called upon leaders to initiate change within the organization and influence the activities of the group towards those achievements. This study will add to the leadership literature by recording and sharing the personal life experiences of four educational leaders who led their school divisions through change initiatives. The next section considers leaders as agents of change.

Change Leadership

This study considered the perspectives of leaders during a period of organizational restructuring. Therefore, for the purposes of this research it was important not only to understand leadership but also to understand the impact that a change environment had on the leadership process. Change “is inherently messy. It is always complicated. It invariably involves a massive array of sharply conflicting demands” (Nadler, 1998, p. 3). Theorists have sought to simplify the concept of change leadership by creating models or by developing a sequence of steps to follow that will help to build an understanding of the role of the leader in the change process more implicitly. However, very little research in the area of change leadership has considered change from the perspective of an individual leader.

Kotter (1996, p.21) outlined eight steps for effective change leadership: a) Establish a sense of urgency, b) Create the guiding coalition, c) Develop a vision and strategy, d) Communicate the change vision, e) Empower broad-based action, f) Generate short-term wins, g) Consolidate gains and produce more change, h) Anchor new

approaches in the culture. In a 2005 article entitled “Leading Change: Learn to do it right”, Kotter prioritized three key tasks that compiled and simplified the eight steps that he advocated originally. First, he said that it is important to manage multiple time lines. He explained that this meant that once the leader had created the sense of urgency he or she must avoid declaring premature victory and create short-term wins but still maintain focus on long-term goals. Secondly, Kotter said that it is important to build coalitions by engaging people who had the right skills, experience, and chemistry. It is also important to continue to grow the coalition strategically by expanding the scope and complexity of the tasks and by working as a team. Finally, he said that it is essential to create a vision for change.

Nadler (1998) pointed out that change impacted the entire organization by using a metaphor to compare change with the action of tossing a pebble into a pond:

You can try to throw it smack in the middle of whichever part of the pond you want to think of as strategy. But if the pebble is big enough – if the change is sufficiently intense – sooner or later, the ripples will spread, disturbing the calm of every portion of the pond. (p. 13)

Nadler recognized that there are no easy solutions when leading change. He cautioned leaders not to jump from one fad to the next and not to consider that there is one magic bullet to make change easy. “If there were, someone would have found [it] by now, and we’d all be using [it]” (p.14). Instead, he encouraged leaders to recognize that change is inevitable. Therefore, leaders need to collect the things that work from each of the fads that pass through over time, and they need to build organizational structures that adapt to change. Nadler (1998) suggested that there were five phases of change: a) Recognizing

the change imperative, b) Developing a shared direction, c) Implementing change, d) Consolidating change, and e) Sustaining change. Nadler illustrated the connection between these five phases through a circular diagram which implied that change is a constantly evolving process rather than an event that can be modeled with a more linear device.

Fullan's (2001) model for change leadership illustrated how leaders should behave in order to gain both external and internal commitment from members of the organization. He asserted that the leader needs to approach change with energy, enthusiasm and hope. Fullan recognized the need for a deeper moral purpose to drive the change initiative. He explained that if the leader engages the organization in a change initiative for selfish reasons that it is challenging to get the people to support the change. He went on to say that when followers understand the greater moral purpose for change, they are intrinsically motivated to get involved. Next, Fullan explained that followers need to understand the concept of change more thoroughly. He explained that change is non-linear so it is impossible to make a checklist for things that the leader needs to do to accomplish the change. He also explained that there is always resistance to change and leaders need to listen to the resisters because sometimes they point out things that leaders do not see. Additionally, he warned that for political reasons it is important to address everyone's concerns. He wanted people to understand that there will be an implementation dip following a change event. When change is implemented, positive results are not visible immediately. Conversely, results are, predictably, somewhat negative in the beginning. Fullan clarified that relationships are key. Leaders of change need to focus on building strong relationships. Next, Fullan pointed out that it is

important to build knowledge. Not only is it important to make information accessible to everyone but also it is important to engage people in the more social aspect of knowledge building, knowledge sharing, and knowledge creation. Finally, Fullan stated that it is imperative that the organization moves into a state of coherence making. This is where the messiness becomes less chaotic and new systems are established that reflect the new organization. When change leaders focus on these six areas with energy, enthusiasm and hope, followers become committed to the organization and more good things happen (Fullan, 2001).

Bligh (2006) suggested that cultural leadership is an important part of leading change processes. Although Bligh's study took place in a post-merger business environment, the results have important implications for leaders of the recently restructured rural school divisions. Bligh interviewed 42 post-merger employees to build an understanding of how cultural leadership made a difference in the post-merger environment. The interviewees reported that it was important for employees to understand the motivation for change and to make a personal commitment to engage in the process. They also suggested that leaders needed to recognize "historically grounded cultural differences and the importance of relatively mundane yet symbolic actions" (p. 416), and also, to keep "actively teambuilding across previous site affiliations, utilizing employee input into post-merger changes, providing outlets for loss and renewal, and creating realistic (as opposed to high) expectations for challenges and opportunities" (p. 416).

Bryan and Joyce (2007) advised that leaders of change profit from investing time in organizational design. They explained that there is a need for both the efficiency of

vertical structures within the organization to ensure accountability and the intellectual stimulation of collaboration to nurture creative connections. They further explained that the leader's role is to envision ways of breaking down the barriers so that team members can collaboratively overcome the obstacles that face the organization. Bryan and Joyce (2007) challenged leaders to remove unnecessary structures that limit collaboration and "redesign the way organizations undertake thought-intensive work" (p. 29).

Researchers who have addressed the area of change leadership have attempted to simplify the concept to provide assistance to practitioners who needed to navigate through the process of organizational change more efficiently. Although there seemed to be little consensus in the literature about the best ways to cope with the challenges that leaders encountered during change events, several of the writers pointed out two things that leaders should focus on during change. First, researchers noted the importance of vision, or direction, or goals. Secondly, several researchers advised leaders to engage the members of the organization in the change process, to listen, and to take time for team building. Missing from the discourse in the area of change leadership was an acknowledgement that the process of change necessitates leaders' transitions that are similar to the transitions of their subordinates. This study adds to that area of the literature by examining the transitions of four educational leaders who are in the process of leading change in their school divisions.

The Directors of Education in this study were leaders of wide-scale organizational change initiatives in their school divisions. The change leadership literature connected significantly with the transitional experiences of the leaders in this study. Within the context of the school division restructuring initiative in rural Saskatchewan, leaders were

called upon to realize growth from a change that was initiated to build further efficiencies within the system (Boughen, 2003). The newly restructured school divisions had more students, more teachers, more communities, and they covered a larger geographic area. The impact of these changes on the individuals within the school division, including the leaders, was significant. They needed to adapt to the newly restructured environment. The following section addresses transitions.

Transitions

Several researchers pointed out that transitions are the part of change that individuals find the most challenging (Bridges, 2003; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). Transitions are the internal adaptations to changes in an individual's external environment. For the four research participants in this study, organizational change was initiated by the mandatory provincial restructuring of school division boundaries. Their transitions, therefore, were the internal adaptations that they made as they adjusted to their new work environments. Their transitions varied with the degree of adaptation that was required to adjust to the changes. For example, some needed to change residences to be closer to their new workplaces, others needed only to change offices, and all of them needed to adjust to working with new colleagues in a much larger organization.

This section reviews the pertinent literature in the area of transitions and illustrates how this study made a contribution to that literature. Researchers have studied how individuals adapted to change (Bridges, 2003; Weick, 2001) and recognized that part of the transition process involves a period of uncertainty before the individual adjusts to the new situation. Additionally, the literature has included research about how individuals respond to new work roles (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Nicholson, 1984) and

considered how leaders successfully manage transitions in their organizations (Bridges, 2003). Recently, an emerging body of research (e.g. Davidson, 2006; Manderscheid, 2006; Carrite 2000), conducted primarily by Ph.D. students, has centered on the concept of the transitional experiences of leaders. This study added to the research about leaders' transitions by recording the transitional experiences of four educational leaders.

The works of Davidson (2006), Manderscheid (2006) and Carrite (2000) each had similarities to this study. Each of those researchers focused on leaders who were experiencing organizational change or who were adapting to new leadership roles. Davidson (2006), who used narrative inquiry and arts inquiry to record the experiences of executives' transitions to new work roles, categorized the findings in three themes: *holding up the mirror during transitions, letting go of one trapeze and grabbing hold of another, and a transition is a journey not a date on the calendar*. Manderscheid (2006) tested a theory he developed called *Leader Assimilation* to see if a facilitated leadership development intervention would ease the transitions of leaders who were placed in new leadership roles. The leaders in his study experienced accelerated learning adaptation while they built relationships with their teams. Teams who participated experienced learning and they built relationships with their new leader. Finally, Carrite (2000) used a phenomenological research approach and structured interviews to interpret executives' perceptions of their experiences while leading their organizations through change. The significant themes that emerged from the analysis of the data were: communication about the change plan, developing relationships, forming and refining a vision, and team building. These studies represented a growing body of research about leaders' transitions.

Goldring, Crowson, Laird, and Berk (2003) studied transition leadership in schools that shifted from court ordered desegregation to court ended desegregation. In their conclusion, they outlined three things that they learned from the study. First, the prior investments that members of the organization, especially leaders, made in developing a sense of place and belonging in the old policy framework were real and the loss was substantial. “The initial stage in policy implementation is often overlooked, the unmaking of previous policy” (Goldring et al., 2003, p. 484). Second, they addressed the importance of creating a new sense of place and belonging within the new organization. The principals in their study stressed the need to redefine what makes the school a school. So, they engaged in building relationships, redefining rules for student behaviour, and connecting with the community. Finally, Goldring et al. identified a need to provide a sense of moving forward. Even though it was difficult to move from the old way, the principals in the study maintained that it was important to move towards something new.

Transitions begin with an ending; the ending of the old reality (Bridges, 2003; Goldring, Crowson, Laird, & Berk, 2003; Woodward & Buchholz, 1987). “Situational change hinges on the new thing, but psychological transition depends on letting go of the old reality and the old identity you had before the change took place” (Bridges, 2003, p. 7). Endings are difficult and are often accompanied by psychological stress. However, until the ending is actualized the process of change cannot begin (Bridges, 2003).

According to Bridges (2003), the ending pushes both individuals and organizations into the neutral zone. Bridges described the neutral zone as a “nowhere between two somewheres” and explained that “while you are in it, forward motion seems to stop while you hang suspended between was and will be” (p. 40). He explained that

time seems to stop while people's frustrations with giving up old ways give way to creativity that enables them to find new ways to accomplish the tasks in the new environment. It is during this time when "restructuring takes place: old and maladaptive habits are replaced with new ones" (Bridges, 2003, p. 9) that reflect the changing needs of the organization. Individuals in the neutral zone often feel displaced and uncertain, however, that uncertainty "is also the reason the neutral zone is more hospitable to new ideas" (pp. 42-43).

Bridges (2001) asserted that the neutral zone leads to new beginnings. Bridges (2003) clarified that beginnings, like transitions, are psychological in nature. They "follow the timing of the mind and the heart" (Bridges, 2003, p. 58). Beginnings happen only once the ending has been actualized and the neutral zone has allowed the individual to create new patterns, new connections, and new ways of doing things. Bridges suggested that "a new beginning 'ratifies' the ending" (p. 59). Therefore, there is risk in engaging in the new beginning. As a result, he advised that leaders who are leading a group through change pay attention to the four Ps: purpose, picture, plan, and part. He explained that everyone in the organization needs to understand the 'purpose' of the intended change. The leader needs to help the group create a detailed 'picture' of how it will be once the change has taken place. Sharing a step by step 'plan' of how the change will be implemented helps the group to be more comfortable with the change. And finally, each person needs to have a 'part' to play in the change (Bridges, 2003, p. 60).

Bridges (2003) pointed out that even though the process that he described appears on paper to be neat and linear, it is actually characterized by messiness. He refined his explanation by saying that the three phases of transition are more like three separate

processes that must take place roughly in the order he described before the transition is complete (p. 9).

The work of Woodward and Buchholz (1987) was somewhat similar to the work of Bridges. They described three phases of change: the ending, the transition, and the beginning. The key to transitions according to Woodward and Buchholz (1987) is to “make the link between the old and the new and to clarify a direction and a goal” (p. 61). It is difficult to let go of the old ways, if the direction in which you are headed is unclear or uncertain and it is important to carry forward things from the past that are working well.

While Bridges (2003) referred to re-patterning and creating new ways of doing things following a period of uncertainty, Weick’s theory of sense-making concentrated specifically on how that re-patterning takes place. Weick (2001) stressed that rather than observing the actions of individuals within organizations, it is important to understand that all actions are interactions. People act in ways that create public value and give public meaning to their actions. Weick believed that when actions are important, public, irrevocable, and volitional that people find ways to justify them. Once they had invested time and effort into those actions, they continue to engage in the specific actions and they defend those actions. As a result, individuals derive their values from their actions. The value systems of individuals within an organization are the foundation of the value system of the organization. Therefore, the value systems of the individuals determine the activities that people within the organization prioritize. Finally, sense making for individuals and within the organization evolves in a retrospective manner with individuals looking back in time to justify the actions that have been given priority.

Weick (2001) explained that people feel great discomfort when events seem inexplicable. They often grasp for the first plausible explanation, even if it does not make sense. It feels better to have an implausible explanation than to have no explanation at all. When grappling for meaning, human tendency steers people back to something that has worked in the past: fight or flight. Within organizations, especially organizations that are in a state of change, it is important for leaders to assist people in arriving quickly at a different plausible explanation. Weick (2001) went on to explain that “people often go through at least three stages when they deal with the inexplicable: superficial simplicity, confused complexity and profound simplicity” (¶ 4). Superficial simplicity is the term that Weick (2001) used to refer to the choice to latch on to the first plausible explanation. He explained that simply having an explanation seems to represent some stability. Confused complexity is the label he used to describe the period of time after the individual begins to realize why the superficial explanation is inaccurate. The individual realizes that some details of the event do not support the explanation and that leads to confusion prompting the individual to refine the explanation. Finally, Weick explained that once sense-making has been achieved the individual is able to provide a plausible and simple explanation. He referred to this state as profound simplicity.

Weick (2001) also pointed out several elements that characterized sense-making. Sense making is a social activity and people need the opportunity to talk to each other in order to create explanations. Sense-making helps people to identify themselves within the organization. He explained that sense-making takes place retrospectively and that people look back to see how they felt at the time and what they said to help them make sense of an event. Primarily, sense-making is based on cues from the environment. Generally,

people look at only a handful of cues to make sense of an event but identifying a larger range of cues helps individuals to create a more accurate picture. Sense-making is ongoing. People continue to revise their explanations as they incorporate more and more information. It begins with the first plausible explanation and becomes more complex from that point. He also asserted that sense-making is enhanced by action. When people are actively engaged, they continue to test their own theories and refine their explanations. Finally, when individuals arrive at the point of profound simplicity, they participate in many cycles of action and revision until they feel justified in their beliefs. When viewed from the perspective of transitions, it seems that the state of profound simplicity would correlate with the end of the transition period when the new beginning was firmly entrenched in the mind of the individual.

Choo (1998) considered sense-making to be the first of three arenas within which organizations utilize information. He contended that sense making or the interpretation of information leads to knowledge creation, to decision making, and finally to organizational action. Choo (1998) explained that during sense making “members must choose what information is significant and should be attended to. They form possible explanations from past experience, and they exchange and negotiate their views in order to arrive at a common interpretation” (p. 3). Choo (1998) used a series of concentric circles to explain that once sense making takes place individuals within the organization begin a process of knowledge creation. “During knowledge creation the main information process is the conversion of knowledge. Members share their personal knowledge through dialogue and discourse, and articulate what they intuitively know through analogies, metaphors, as well as more formal channels” (p. 3). Finally, the information is

used in decision making where individuals process and analyze alternative choices to establish the relative value of each. Choo (1998) asserted that this three stage processing of information leads to organizational action. According to Choo, sense making, knowledge creation, and decision making are all important aspects of the transitional processes of the Directors of Education.

In addition to the research about how individuals adapt to change within organizations, other research has been conducted in the area of work role transitions. Knowledge of this literature was also critical for understanding the transitions of the Directors of Education. The research in this area was conducted with the primary goal of assisting organizations to be more successful in mentoring and inducting new employees. Although the participants in this study were the leaders of their school divisions, they were also new employees working in new work roles.

Van Maanen and Schein (1977) were interested in how organizations develop the ability to maintain traditions despite changes in staff and management. Their theory of organizational socialization described the “process by which a person acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role” (p. 3). They focused on six dimensions of the organizational socialization process to explain whether the new recruit adapted to the role in a custodial fashion or a more innovative way. The six dimensions of organizational socialization, according to Van Maanen and Schein (1977) included: a) collective socialization processes compared to individual processes, b) formal processes compared to informal processes, c) sequentially planned methods compared to random methods, d) fixed or time bounded processes compared with variable processes based on achievement, e) processes that involved a mentor (serial)

compared to processes that did not involve a mentor (disjunctive), and f) processes characterized by investiture or the validation of previous identity compared to processes characterized by divestiture or the stripping of previous identity. Van Maanen and Schein (1977) postulated that different combinations of these six dimensions impacted whether the organizational socialization process resulted in custodial responses or innovative responses from new recruits.

Nicholson (1984) utilized the ideas of Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) theory of organizational socialization when he developed his theory of work role transitions. Nicholson considered the concept of role adjustment versus self adjustment and stated that through the socialization process that takes place when an individual adapts to a new job that either the person adjusts to fit the role or the role adjusts to fit the person. He focused on comparing the degree of discretion (decision making power) and the degree of novelty (similarity to past experiences) between the individual's new job and his or her previous job. He also took into account the person's desire for control and for feedback. Nicholson's (1984) findings suggested that when there is a low degree of novelty and a low degree of discretion, the adjustment to the new role is characterized by replication. When there is a high degree of novelty and a low degree of discretion, the work role transition is one of absorption. Conversely, when the job includes a high degree of discretion, a new employee in unfamiliar surroundings reacts with exploration and an employee in familiar surroundings exhibits signs of determination to change the role to fit his needs.

Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman. (1995), considered work role transitions from a different perspective than Nicholson. The model developed by Schlossberg et al.

was designed to help counselors to understand adults in transition. Similar to Bridges (2003), the Schlossberg et al. model recognized the directional nature of transitions over time. Transitions, according to Schlossberg et al. (1995), begin with an event, or a non-event, resulting in change. Schlossberg et al. also suggested that it is important to consider the type, context, and impact of the specific catalyst that gives rise to the transition. During the transition phase, the individual's potential coping resources are dependent upon the self, the situation, the support, and the strategies. Additionally, these theorists suggested that counselors should prepare to help people adjust to individual transitions, work transitions and relationship transitions.

Adams and Spencer (1988) identified a series of factors that influenced how an individual experienced transitions. The first, similar to Van Maanen and Schein (1977), and Nicholason (1984), was *novelty*. Adams and Spencer (1988) claimed that a high degree of unfamiliarity spurred by change often makes the transition process more challenging. Like Woodward and Buchholz (1987), Adams and Spencer suggested the degree of *clarity of expectations* for the change also plays a role in how smoothly individuals adjust to the new environment. Additionally, Adams and Spencer (1988) suggested that transitions for the individual are affected by the individuals' *stage of life*, the level of *self-awareness*, the *number of other transitions* taking place in the individual's life at the same time, and the *truth* or reality of the transitions. To explain, Adams and Spencer (1988) pointed out that, "the more strongly we deny to our selves the significance of a change, the longer it is likely to take for us to reorient ourselves to the new situation" (Adams & Spencer, 1988, p. 62).

In addition to these factors, Adams and Spencer (1988) outlined seven stages in the transition process: a) destabilizing and losing focus, b) minimizing the impact, c) questioning self-worth, d) letting go of the past, e) testing the new situation, f) searching for meaning, and g) integrating the experience. Although they pointed out that it is normal and healthy for people in transition to progress through all seven stages, they explained that the process is not always linear. Instead of moving through the stages one at a time, Adams and Spencer (1988) noted that people in transition often do a great deal of “backing and forthing” between the stages.

The transitions literature built an understanding of individual transitions, transitions within organizations, work role transitions, and the leader’s role in managing the transitions of others. In doing so, it provided rich information for this study because it illustrated the connection between transitions and leadership. However, only a few studies have considered transitions from the perspective of a leader as an individual in transition during organizational change. Leaders play a critical role in designing and directing organizational change and in managing the transitions of others, therefore, it is critical to understand how they experience the transitions that result from change, as well. This study added to the transitions literature by documenting the transitional experiences of four educational leaders who were in the process of leading their organizations through change events. The next section illustrates how the transitions literature was drawn together and synthesized to create the conceptual framework that guided this study.

Establishing a Conceptual Framework

Considered collectively, the research that has been reviewed in the area of transitions formed a foundation upon which to consider the transitional experiences of the

Directors of Education as they moved into their new roles in the restructured school divisions in rural Saskatchewan. In order to establish a conceptual framework through which I could understand the research more comprehensively, I created a series of heuristics that synthesized several of the previously presented studies.

Figure 2.1 represents the process of the transitions as it was outlined by Bridges (2003) and Woodward and Buchholz (1997). It was imperative that the heuristic that illustrated the transitional process included the concept that transitions take place over time (Bridges, 2003; Schlossberg et al., 1995). This concept is indicated by the single black arrow at the bottom of the diagram. Also, it was important to recognize that transitions begin with an ending (Bridges 2003, Woodward & Buchholz, 1987), an event, or a non-event (Schlossberg et al., 1995). The diamond shaped box on the left hand side of the heuristic depicts the change event. Finally, Bridges (2003) pointed out that the transition process consists of three non-linear phases. Although the chronology of the transition represented by the line indicates linearity, an individual in transition, according to Bridges, does not pass through the three stages in a linear fashion. Instead, he or she experiences the ending, the neutral zone, and the beginning simultaneously (Bridges, 2003). As pointed out by Weick (2001) and Choo (1998) the progression of an individual's response to change often involves an iterative process of refining ideas until they make sense within the environment. Furthermore, time in this sense is not bounded. The length of time required to transition is unique for each individual and within each context (Bridges, 2003; Schlossberg et al., 1995). Although the chronological orientation of the heuristic suggests linearity, the process of transition is non-linear.

The degree to which the individual is involved in each of the three phases is represented by the amount of that element shown at any point on the time line. For example, when the change event is announced, the ending of the old reality figures prominently within an individual's experience and as time passes the individual becomes more focused on building new patterns. Finally, when the process of sense-making is nearing completion the beginning of the new reality is the most significant feature for the individual. Figure 2.1, therefore, shows that transitions take place over time, are non-linear, and yet, consist of three distinct phases.

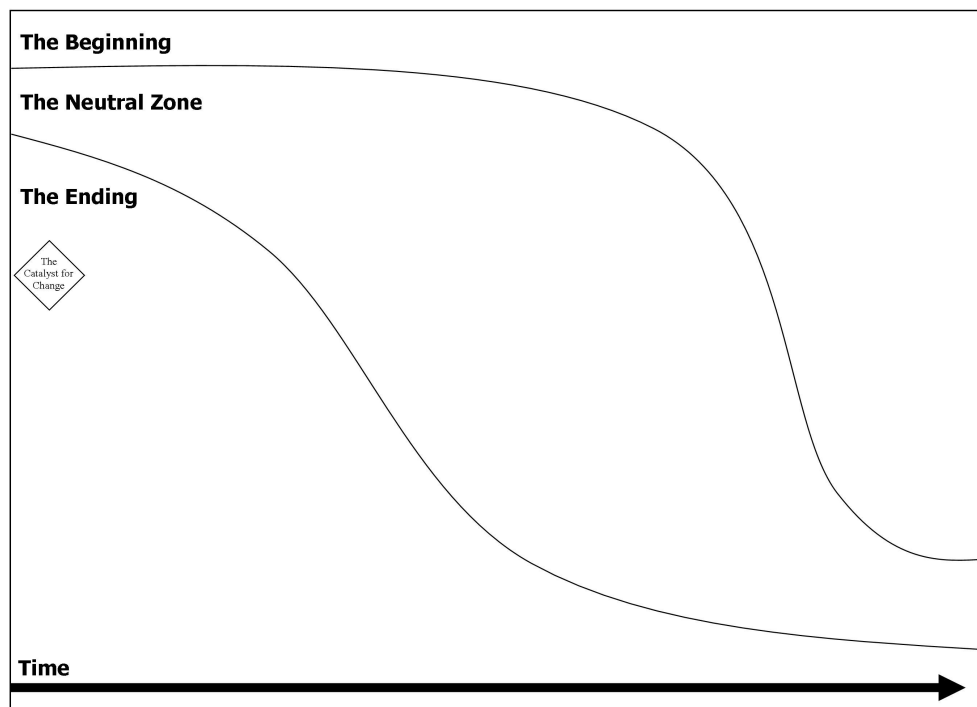


Figure 2. 1 Transitional Phases Adapted from Bridges (2003, p. 5)

Figure 2.2 is a Venn diagram that illustrates the interactions between the individual's personal characteristics, the context of his or her transition, and the shift in work role that the individual experienced. Schlossberg et al. (1995) found that a person's ability to adapt to a new situation was partially dependent upon that individual's personal

characteristics. One of the circles in the Venn diagram represents the personal characteristics of an individual in transition.

Another circle represents the role that context plays in the transitional experience. Schlossberg et al. (1995) suggested that to be able to understand an individual's transitions that counselors needed to understand the unique context within which those transitions took place. For example, did the transitions necessitate the loss of relationships? Were others close to the individual also in transition? Was the transition personal, relationship oriented, or work related? Was the person married or single? Was the person experiencing other transitions at the same time? The contexts within which the transitions occurred for the four Directors of Education varied greatly from one individual to another.

The final circle in Figure 2.2 represents the change in work role that the individual is experiencing. Nicholson (1984) focused specifically on the level of discretion and the level of novelty that was offered by the new position. Nicholson (1984) noted that the transition would be influenced by a change in the level of discretion or novelty between the old role and the new role. The Directors of Education who participated in this study all experienced a work role transition. Therefore, it was expected that their transitions would be affected by the specific elements of their new work roles and how similar or how different those characteristics were from their previous work roles.

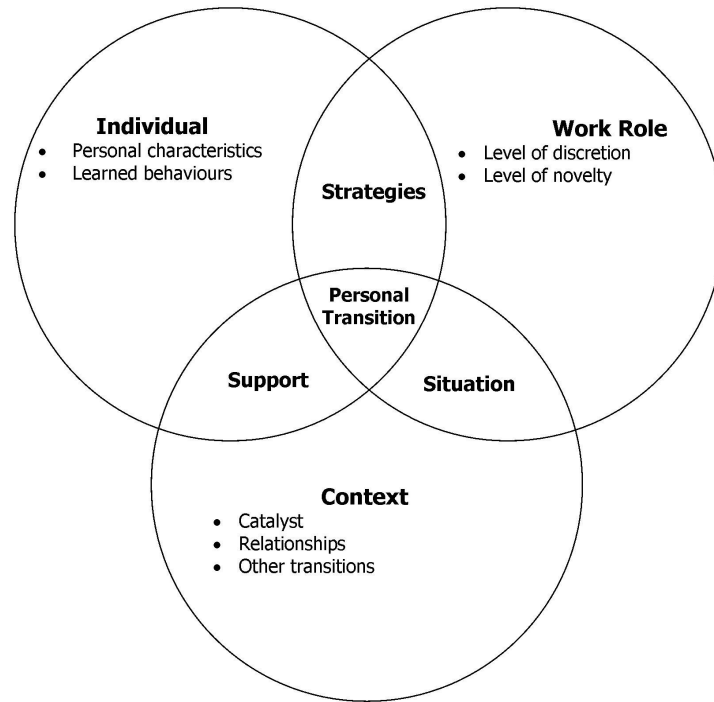


Figure 2. 2 Individual-Work Role-Context

Schlossberg et al. (1995) also indicated the importance of an individual's *strategies* for coping with the change, his or her *support* network, and the details of the change *situation*. These three aspects of an individual's transitions are indicated in Figure 2.2 at the intersection points between the individual, the new work role, and the context within which the transition takes place. At the intersection of the individual and the context, the availability of support is recognized. *Support* is viewed as a function of the individual and the context of the transition because the amount and type of support that an individual has is dependent upon his or her unique characteristics and upon the specific circumstances in any given environment. For example, a director who had been involved in education in the same community for twenty years would have developed a substantial support network both personal and professional. However, the nature of that support network might have also been dependent upon the individual's personal

characteristics. If he or she was motivated by a desire to create community and acted upon that desire by participating in a variety of initiatives, a support network might exist within different community groups. Both the personal characteristics and the contextual environment contributed to the type and level of support that the individual in transition had available.

At the intersection of the individual and the new work role are the strategies that the individual has available for coping with the transition. An individual's strategies are a function of the individual because they are determined by the person's philosophy, and motive as well as his or her manner and methods. The choices of strategies that are available are further screened by what is appropriate within the context of the new role and what is necessary for the person to make the adjustment to the new role. Directors who had taken positions in one of the newly restructured school divisions would predictably experience high levels of discretion and moderate levels of novelty. According to Nicholson (1984), that combination would result in the individual reacting in an exploratory fashion. Therefore, he or she might try out some different strategies and find out what worked or what did not work through a trial and error process. However, a change in the level of discretion was also important to Nicholson (1984). Therefore, the strategies that were implemented by the various Directors might also vary according to whether the new position accorded them greater or lesser amounts of discretion than their past position.

The *situation* was further understood through the interaction between the context and the new work role. The context for the transitions included whether or not it was necessary for the individual to move, how many unrelated transitions the individual was

experiencing at the same time, and how the transitions impacted the individual's support network. These details coupled with the particulars of the individual's new work role essentially described the specific situation in which the transition took place. Was it necessary for the participant to move to take the job as the Director of Education? Did his or her work relationships have to change slightly or substantially?

Finally, the point in Figure 2.2 where all three components overlap is labeled the personal transition. Prior to conducting the research I believed that the intersection of the self, the context, and the new work role would determine the details of the individual's transitional journey. This interaction was thought to define the personal transition and to determine the intensity of the impact that the transition would have on the individual's life. "For an individual undergoing a transition, it is not the event...that is the most important but its impact, that is, the degree to which the transition alters one's daily life" (Schlossberg et al., 1995, p. 33).

Having created a more detailed illustration of the unique characteristics of each individual's journey through the transition process, it was appropriate to merge those details into the process as it was illustrated in Figure 2.1. Therefore, Figure 2.3 shows the convergence of the two heuristics.

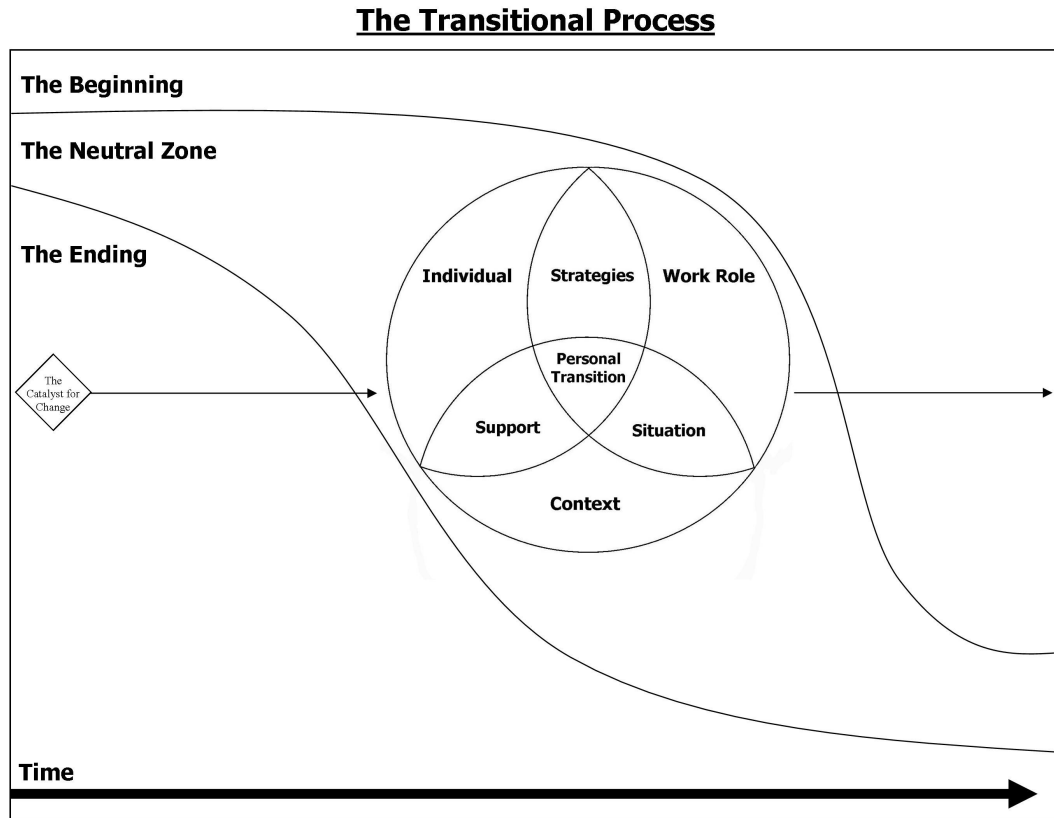


Figure 2. 3 The Individual in the Transition Process

Figure 2.3 shows the individual complete with their personal characteristics, contexts, unique work roles, situations, supports, and strategies moving through the transitional process. On the left hand side the catalyst begins the change process. The arrow in the middle of the diagram indicates the individual's progress through time. Although the arrow is straight, it is not intended to indicate that the individual's journey is linear or predictable, only that in time all individuals will eventually adapt to the new situation. From there the individual moves through the ending and the neutral zone where the individual engages in sense-making to a new beginning that is characterized by new patterns and new ways of doing things. Figure 2.3, which represents a collective

perspective of the transitions literature, served as the conceptual framework for this study.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 presented a survey of the literature that grounded the transitional experiences of the Directors of Education within the contexts of educational restructuring, leadership, and transitions and established the need for this study. Previous to this study, the literature did not include work on the transitional experiences of educational leaders who were leading their school divisions through restructuring initiatives. Within the restructuring literature, a majority of the research had focused on the perspective of the organization and established arguments in favor of or opposed to amalgamation processes. This study looks at restructuring from the perspective of the individual and records, compares and shares the experiences of four leaders. The leadership literature indicated a concentration on how leaders should lead during change. This study moved away from that perspective and focused on how individual leaders experienced the transitions associated with change. Finally, the literature on transitions examined the personal transitions of individuals affected by change, and the leader's responsibility to lead the transitions of their subordinates during organizational change but failed to consider leaders' transitions. Leaders experience their own transitions while in the process of designing the change initiatives that catalyze transitions, and managing the transitions of others. This study focused exclusively on leaders' transitions. By documenting the lived experiences of the Directors of Education who participated in this study and by comparing their experiences to the conceptual framework, this study contributed to the collective knowledge of how leaders experience change. Chapter 3

explains the methodology that was used to gather and analyze the lived experiences of the four research participants.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Research questions necessitate the utilization of particular methodologies that are designed to collect data that will provide the appropriate answers. Chapter 3 outlines the multiple case study design that I used to investigate the transitional experiences of four Directors of Education. The chapter begins with a definition of multiple case studies. Then, it explains my rationale for choosing to use a multiple case study approach for this study, the epistemological orientation of the research, and my role as a researcher in this study. The next section details the process that I employed for conducting the multiple case study research: the research participants, the data collection methods, and the data analysis. Finally, it clarifies the techniques that I used to ensure trustworthiness and ethical responsibility.

Defining Multiple Case Study Design

Case study methodology provides opportunities for researchers to focus their attention specifically on one instance of a particular phenomenon. Stake (2005) asserted that case study may be used to develop a better understanding of a specific case (intrinsic) or to provide insight into an issue (instrumental). “Case study methods involve systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how it operates or functions” (Berg, 2001, p. 225). A case study is “a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries. I can ‘fence in’ what I am going to study” (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). Although many researchers use case study design and define it somewhat differently, the

factor that commonly distinguishes case studies from other research designs is the choice to focus on the one among others rather than on the general population.

In this study I chose to follow the case study method of Yin (2003). He argued that the definition of case study must distinguish it from some ethnographic methods or participant observation. To emphasize this point the definition put forward by Yin (2003) focused on the process of the research design: “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident.” Yin (2003) went on to say that researchers should choose case study designs when they “deliberately wanted to cover contextual conditions – believing that they might be highly pertinent to [the] phenomenon of study” (p. 13). Furthermore, Yin (2003) pointed out that because the complex relationship between the phenomenon and the context makes it difficult to distinguish between the two, the definition of case study needed to include a description of the technical characteristics of the case study as a research strategy.

The case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than other data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (pp. 13-14)

Yin (1989) also delineated three principles that were essential to follow in case study research: a) use multiple sources of data, b) create a case study data base that includes various types of evidence from the case, and c) maintain a detailed record of the steps

that were taken in the process of the research. Yin's (2003) definition established the case study as a method for designing a study, collecting the data, and analyzing the results.

Multiple case study design is a variation of the case study that considers a number of cases collectively in order to investigate a phenomenon, population or general condition (Stake, 2005, p. 446). The cases "...are chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, and perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases" (Stake, 2005, p. 446). Yin (2003) asserted that "a major insight is to consider multiple cases as one would consider multiple experiments – that is to follow a 'replication' logic" (p. 47). To do that Yin (2003, pp. 46-53) suggested that each case should be treated as a separate study. The results for each case should be reported and then the cases should be compared to build an understanding of the similarities and differences between the cases.

Rationale for Choosing Multiple Case Study Design

According to Yin (1989), "case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over the events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p. 1). The three criteria that Yin offered in the preceding statement matched well with the details of my study. The main question of my inquiry asked about "how" the Directors of Education "experienced" the transitions associated with wide-scale organizational change. Being an individual who was not directly involved in the restructuring initiative, I had no control over the events. Additionally, my literature review indicated that leaders' transitions are considered by researchers to be a contemporary phenomenon about which

little research has been conducted. Therefore, my study met all three criteria that Yin used to determine when case study would be an effective methodology to employ.

The large scale restructuring initiative provided an excellent opportunity for me to use a multiple case study design. I was able to interact with several participants who, due to the nature of the restructuring event, were going through similar transitions at the same time. I believed that it would be an excellent opportunity to document and compare their experiences. In the design phase of the study, I anticipated that the multiple sets of data that I collected would either support or refute the previous research about transitions. Instead, I found that having the opportunity to understand transitions from the perspectives of several different participants enriched my knowledge and helped me to comprehend the previous literature more fully.

Research Orientation

The root of individual difference exists within each person's ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Hodgkinson (1996, pp. 8-11) explained that an individual's ontology deals with the nature or reality of being and can be understood through the guiding question, "what is real?" Epistemology deals with what is true and how you know it is true. "What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22)? Finally, axiology determines what is right, what is good, or what is beautiful (Hodgkinson, 1996). Slight variations in these personal belief systems create a virtually infinite number of unique characteristics throughout the human population. These unique characteristics account for differences in the questions that researchers ask and in the methodologies that they utilize to seek the answers. Therefore, research design is a complex process contingent upon interactive connections between the research

questions that are asked, the phenomenon under investigation, and the worldview of the researcher. This section describes my personal worldview and draws the connection between me and my research design.

Epistemologically, I believe that we can only truly understand a phenomenon when we focus on both people's unique perspectives and interpretations, and their common experiences. Their interpretations and perceptions illustrate the scope of possibilities and their common experiences suggest the probability that part of the human experience is more predictable; more tangible. I believe, on one hand, that individuals define and determine their environments. On the other hand, I am intrigued by the experiential similarities that can be identified across a variety of environments. I believe that the world is partially socially constructed. Individuals interpret their experiences in unique ways. However, I also recognize value in identifying common experiences as a way to establish knowledge about the predictable or knowable elements of human experience.

Transitions, the phenomenon under investigation in my study, are complex. Transitions are internal adaptations and therefore are subject to individual interpretation and experience. The deepest understanding that can be developed about transitions, therefore, is an understanding of how transitions are experienced by individuals. Unlike a phenomenon that is manifested externally, like change, transitions can be known best through the exploration of human experience. Understanding the common experiences that individuals in transition share, indicates that there is a more knowable or more tangible aspect to transitions, as well. It is important to develop both the knowledge of the complexity and diversity of individual experience and the knowledge of the

similarities between the experiences of individuals. This study focused on understanding the individual transitional experiences of the four Directors of Education as they led their school divisions through organizational restructuring and on identifying similarities within those experiences.

The study of education and of educational leadership is a study of part of the complex social world in which we live. I believe that the utilization of qualitative methods, which allow researchers to investigate social phenomena within the complexity of the environment, strengthen the research design. I am particularly interested in change and I focus on possibilities. I place a high value on harmony and I tend to focus my research on understanding the current social environment. Through this lens, I considered the questions and designed the study. I wanted to understand the cases through the eyes of the participants and I wanted to consider how the conceptual framework would help me to reflect on and connect to each of the cases. As a result, I chose to follow the case study method that was suggested by Yin (1989, 2003) because his methods responded to my own innate desires to describe the life experiences of the participants and to draw connections between those life experiences and the understanding of the phenomenon that was described in the literature.

The Researcher's Role

As researcher, I acted as the portal through which the experiences of transition were shared. I collected information through questionnaires, interviews, and direct observation and then used the information to write a descriptive account of each case. Then, I analyzed the details searching for evidence that suggested whether or not my conceptual framework reflected the experiences of my participants. Therefore, my role as

researcher was not only as a conduit of information relayed by each of the participants but also as a filter to identify the significant and non-significant details. “One might say that a personal contract is drawn between researcher and phenomenon. Researchers ask, ‘What can be learned here that a reader needs to know’” (Stake, 2005, p. 449)? As the researcher, it became my responsibility to make choices about which evidence to seek and which pieces to highlight from the data that I collected. Therefore, in the end the choices I made had a considerable impact on the story that was told about each of the cases and on how the connections were made between the cases.

The Design for the Study

Yin (1989) suggested that the researcher focus on the following components of design when making the plans for case study research: research questions, propositions, unit of analysis, logic linking the data to the propositions and criteria for interpreting the findings. Yin suggested that the researcher should develop a number of theoretical propositions as part of the design process. As a result, during the design phase I went back to the literature about transitions and developed a series of propositions. Then, I recognized that each of the propositions was reflected in the conceptual framework for the study. To avoid redundancy, I chose not to include the propositions in my study and to utilize the conceptual framework in a similar way to which Yin recommended the use of propositions. Therefore, this section outlines the way that I managed the research questions, unit of analysis, and the criteria for interpreting the findings.

Research Questions

1. How did the Directors of Education, as the leaders of their school divisions, experience the transitions associated with organizational restructuring?
2. What contextual factors influenced the transitional experiences of Directors of Education in rural school divisions during the restructuring initiative?
3. What strategies did the four Directors of Education use to cope with their transitional experiences during organizational restructuring?

Unit of Analysis

Within a case study, it is imperative that the researcher understands the boundaries of the case. What is the case? For me, defining the unit of analysis was quite straight forward because each of the cases was an individual person. This study focused on the transitional experiences of four individuals. However, Schlossberg et al. (1995) and Nicholson (1984) both recognized that the context for the transitions could be very influential in determining how the transitions are experienced by each individual. Therefore, it was also important to focus on the context of the provincial restructuring initiative, the context of the specific school division restructuring, and the context of the individual participant's life.

The cases, or participants, in this study were selected through a process where all of the Directors of Education serving in one of the twelve restructured school divisions were invited to volunteer to participate in this study. The invitation was included as an item in the initial questionnaire (see Appendix E). In response, five Directors of

Education from rural school divisions that were affected by the January 2006 restructuring initiative in the province of Saskatchewan volunteered to participate in the in-depth interview portion of the study. One mentioned that he was concerned about the time commitment but that if I had trouble finding participants he would make arrangements to participate. Stake (2005) suggested that it was most important to choose a case that you could learn from. Stake went on to explain that it “may mean taking the one most accessible or the one [you] can spend the most time with” (p. 451) He explained that “potential for learning is a different and sometimes superior criterion to representativeness” (p. 451). Because I was concerned that the one individual’s reluctance to invest too much time might affect my potential for learning, I decided not to ask him to participate.

Coincidentally, the four remaining Directors of Education, who volunteered to participate in the interview portion of the study, had characteristics that reflected the population of Directors of Education in the restructured school divisions. For example, each of the participants had significant experience in educational administration, had been a Director of Education prior to the amalgamation, and had previously experienced one or more school division restructuring initiatives. Additionally, the gender distribution of one woman and three men roughly represented the demographics of the total population of twelve Directors. Although gender differences existed among the participants, neither the data collection nor the data analysis in this study focused on the effect that gender differences may have had on the transitional experiences of the Directors of Education.

In addition to the interviews with the four primary participants, the study included data from: a) an interview with the individual who represented the League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents (LEADS) on the restructuring committee to collect background information about the restructuring process, b) a questionnaire of current and past Directors of Education still working within one of the restructured school divisions, and c) the document analysis of the minutes of the restructuring committee and the bulletins that the committee prepared to guide the provincial process. The interview that I conducted with the LEADS representative on the restructuring committee and the document analysis provided data that were utilized to establish the context and the process of the restructuring initiative. The data collected through the questionnaire helped me to anticipate some of the transitional experiences that educational leaders had during the restructuring initiative and helped me to identify points along the timeline that seemed to be significant to the respondents. I used this information to help me prepare for the in-depth interviews.

Criteria for Interpreting the Findings

Although I was already required to plan for the analysis as part of the dissertation process, following Yin's (1989) outline for designing a case study had a significant impact on the way that I proceeded with the study. Yin's notion of drawing a logical connection between the data and the propositions, or in this case the conceptual framework, established the conceptual framework as an anchor for the study. Yin (1989) suggested that this was the preferred strategy for analyzing data and asserted that it was important to have a general analytic strategy with the ultimate goal to treat evidence fairly, produce compelling analytic conclusions, and rule out alternative interpretations

(Yin, 1989). He suggested three strategies that I thought would work for this study: pattern matching, time series analysis, and explanation building. I have detailed the processes that I used for each of these data analysis techniques in the Data Analysis section.

Data Collection

This study employed the use of a questionnaire, a series of semi-structured interviews with four different participants, and a period of direct observation. The first principle of case study design according to Yin (1989) is to use multiple, not just single, sources of evidence. A variety of data collection techniques allowed me to confirm the results through triangulation or “the process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (Stake, 2005, p. 454). This section outlines the detailed plans for each of those data collection techniques.

Questionnaires

The data collection began with a questionnaire (see Appendix E) which was distributed to the members of the Saskatchewan League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents (LEADS). The data collected through the questionnaire represented my first opportunity to interact with the restructuring experiences of the LEADS members. The questionnaires were distributed through school division offices and asked respondents to share their experiences with the personal transitions involved in being the leader of the wide-scale change initiative. The questionnaire also invited current Directors of Education working within one of the recently restructured school divisions to participate in a three session interview process (see item #7, Appendix E).

The questionnaire was available as an online form or in paper format. The paper version of the questionnaire was mailed to the participants through their school division offices. A self-addressed envelope was included for those wishing to return the form by mail. For those who preferred to respond to the questionnaire online, a page of instructions was included (see Appendix I).

In total 22 participants responded to the questionnaire. Initially, the questionnaires helped me to understand some of the issues that were associated with the restructuring process. The data that I collected through the questionnaire from the Superintendents² and Directors around the province helped me to form an initial understanding of their restructuring experiences prior to the interviews with the four Directors of Education. As a result when I conducted the one on one interviews with the four participants, I was better prepared to grasp the stories and to ask follow up questions that would draw out the details. For example, the questionnaire data pointed out that ‘people’ issues were critical - building relationships, developing culture, and achieving equity. The questionnaires also gave me some insight into the significance that the switch to a policy governance framework had for many of the Boards of Education in the province. As I progressed into the interview phase of the study, these two issues surfaced repeatedly.

² Within the Saskatchewan context the term ‘Superintendent’ refers to individuals who are leaders of particular portfolios within the school division. For example, a school division will appoint a Superintendent of Curriculum or a Superintendent of Student Services. Following the restructuring initiative, many former Directors, who either did not apply for the Directorship or were not selected for the position, accepted positions as Superintendents in their former school divisions.

Interviews

Prior to the interviews with the four Directors of Education, I interviewed the individual who represented the League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents (LEADS) on the Restructuring Coordinating Committee (Appendix F). The Restructuring Coordinating Committee, a group that was chaired by the Deputy Minister of Education, was an advisory committee charged with the task of advising the Government on the processes, key issues, and decisions that were related to the restructuring initiative. The committee included government representatives from each of the educational stakeholder groups in the province. The goal of the interview with the LEADS representative on this committee was to gather background information about the restructuring initiative. I elected to interview the LEADS representative rather than the chair of the committee because he represented the interests of my research participants and I felt that he would be able to address the process from the perspective of the Directors of Education. An outline of the interview questions appears in Appendix F. I learned a great deal about the context of the restructuring initiative from this individual. Additionally, he shared the minutes of the Restructuring Coordinating Committee with me. The data from his interview and the documents with which he provided me, contributed greatly to the construction of the background information about the restructuring initiative that was presented in Chapter 4.

The next interviews involved the four Directors of Education who volunteered to participate in a reflective interview process (see Appendix G). The purpose of this interview phase was to gather the stories that detailed the transitional experiences of these leaders. I elected to utilize Seidman's (2006) method for in-depth phenomenological

interviewing. Seidman (2006) explained that he used interviews because he was interested in other people's stories. He went on to describe storytelling as a meaning making process wherein the storyteller selects constitutive details, reflects on them, gives them order, and thereby makes sense of them (p. 7).

Seidman (2006) proposed a three interview schedule. The purpose of the first interview was to develop a focused life history of the individual which helped me to understand the context of the participants' transitions. The second one provided the participant with an opportunity to tell the stories of his or her lived experiences during the restructuring initiative. Finally, the third interview asked the participant to reflect on the meaning of the experiences. Each interview took approximately 90-120 minutes (pp. 16-21).

Interview one was important to this study because it established my relationship with the participants and developed the context in which the transitions occurred. Yin (1989) explained that one of the main determinants of a case study was that it "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (p. 13). Stake (2005) described the case study as a "complex entity located in a milieu or situation embedded in a number of contexts or backgrounds" (p. 449) and suggested that the researcher should consider the historical, cultural, physical, social, economic, political, ethical, and aesthetic contexts. The first interview was important to this research for two reasons. First, transitions take place internally therefore, it was crucial for me to develop an understanding of the individual's background and character before I engaged in the transitional journey. Second, the conceptual framework for this study suggested that the way an individual experiences transitions is influenced by his or her personal

circumstances (Schlossberg et al., 1995; Nicholson, 1984). So, it was also important to understand the details of each participant's life. I structured the first interview to gather information about three different contexts that I felt would be important to the participants in this study: personal, educational, and leadership. The participants explained their background and experiences in each of these areas and, as they did, I started to see a picture emerge of the individual at the centre of each case.

Prior to the second interview, I presented each participant with a timeline indicating the critical events in the school division restructuring process and asked them to add events that would have personal significance. This technique is described by Chell (2004) as a technique used by critical incident researchers to minimize the amount of direction that the researcher imposes upon the stories of each interviewee. This task also helped participants to recall the events that were important during each of the time periods and it ensured that they were able to reflect with sufficient detail to provide me with the evidence that I required about their transitional experiences. The second interviews flowed easily and I found that all four participants were able to relate their experiences with detail, depth, and insight.

Between the second and third interviews, I analyzed the data that I had collected and wrote the first draft of the case. The third interview served as a member check. I sent each participant a copy of the first draft of his or her case and asked them to preview the document in preparation for the interview. This provided a basis upon which participants could reflect on the narratives but also it served as an interactive way to ensure that the participants could identify with my interpretations of their experiences. Yin (1989) and Hartley (2004) both encouraged case study researchers to go back to participants to

ensure that they had presented the case accurately. Hartley (2004) suggested that researchers bear the responsibility for the interpretations but that participants should agree with the way that the facts were presented. The third interview provided an opportunity for discussion and revision with each of the cases. In all four cases, the participants asked me to make small changes. Primarily, the changes were misunderstandings that I had developed based on the interview data. In some instances, participants just wanted to be more comfortable with how their stories were portrayed in the research. Additionally, the third interview provided an opportunity for me to describe to the participant what I had learned about transitions from their stories and for them to consider whether or not the understandings that I developed reflected their experiences and their personal understandings.

Document Analysis

Following my initial interview with the LEADS representative on the restructuring committee, I engaged in a process of document analysis with the minutes of the restructuring committee and with the bulletins (Appendix K) that this committee created to guide the restructuring process in the province. The documents provided important information about the process and helped me to understand how the Directors of Education were supported and guided throughout the change process.

Direct Observation

Yin (1989) suggested that direct observation offered contextual data and provided insight into interpersonal behaviors and motives. Several of the transition theorists suggested that the characteristics of the individual at the centre of the transition were important factors in the way that the transitions played out (Adams & Spencer, 1988;

Nicholson, 1984; Schlossberg et al., 1995). In addition to the interviews, I spent a day in the field with each of the participants. During the participant observation portion of my data collection, I had an opportunity to get to know each participant outside of the interview environment and I developed an understanding of the new organization. Through this type of data collection, I also gained an understanding of the physical and social contexts within which the transitions took place. All of this information helped me to understand the participants' experiences more fully.

Data Analysis

The following sections outline the strategies that I used to study the data and to build understanding about how the Directors of Education had experienced the transitions associated with school division restructuring, how their unique contexts had affect their transitional experiences, and what strategies they had used for coping with their transitions. The sections that follow outline the three data analysis techniques that I used: pattern matching, time series analysis, and explanation building.

Pattern Matching

The first step in analyzing the data that I collected was to sort it into themes or categories. To achieve this, I collected lists of quotations from the interviews that I felt were significant indicators of the participants' transitional experiences. I also collected quotations that connected to elements of the conceptual framework. This produced a collection of fifteen to twenty lists of quotations for each participant. Then, I transferred the significant events, memories, and concepts on to sticky notes that I attempted to arrange on wall charts. Each participant was represented by a different color of sticky note so the patterns that emerged helped me to identify both the similarities and the

differences within the four stories. Finally, I organized the information from each case on to a diagram of the conceptual framework to build an understanding of whether the data from each individual case supported the conceptual framework. These procedures allowed me to identify general trends in the data that were collected.

Time Series Analysis

The technique of time series analysis looks at patterns over time (Yin, 1989, p. 113). Because transitions take place over a period of time, time series analysis was a useful tool for understanding the phenomenon. I developed a chronological narrative to illustrate each of the cases and I recorded the major events in chronological order on the conceptual framework. This helped me to understand, both in words and pictures, how each of the Director's experiences compared to the process of transition as described in the literature. While matching the data to the conceptual framework, I also looked for areas of incongruence which signified that the specific case did not reflect the conceptual framework. This data analysis technique helped me to evaluate my conceptual framework as it applied to the real-life experiences of the Directors of Education in my study.

Explanation Building

Yin (1989) explained that explanation building was the process of analyzing data by building an explanation about the case. He went on to clarify that explanation building was an iterative process. As I analyzed each case and added the information to my wall charts, an illustration of the transitional experiences of the participants emerged.

In Chapter 4, I have detailed the explanation building process in discussion sections that follow each of the cases. My understanding started to develop with the information that was collected in the first case and expanded with each new case. In the

case discussions, I have explored each person's story and outlined the connections that I made to the other cases, the conceptual framework, and to various parts of the literature.

Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1989) outlined a set of criteria for maintaining and judging the quality or trustworthiness of a qualitative study (pp. 228-251). Trustworthiness, they suggested, could be established through the use of criteria that is parallel to the criteria typically used to judge quality in a quantitative study (p. 233). Rather than determining the validity, generalizability, reliability and objectivity of a study, the qualitative researcher seeks to resolve questions of credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. This section outlines the techniques that were used to ensure that those criteria were met within this study.

Credibility

Credibility ensures that there is a match between the "constructed realities of the respondents and the reconstructions attributed to them" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 237). To enhance the credibility in this study I employed several techniques that were suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1989).

"Triangulation" was the primary method that I used to ensure credibility in this study. I triangulated the data through the use of multiple cases. Stake (2005) asserted that "...illustration of how a phenomenon occurs in the circumstances of several exemplars can provide valued and trustworthy knowledge" (pp. 458-459). I also triangulated the data by collecting data through several different methods.

I utilized "progressive subjectivity," a technique suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1989) to monitor researcher bias throughout the course of the study. I used journaling

before and after each stage of my work to determine some of my own biases that might have had an impact on the results of the study. The journals also helped me to articulate some of the connections that I was making between my knowledge of the literature and the details from each of the cases.

The process of “member checks” provided an opportunity for research participants to evaluate whether or not I had accurately interpreted the data. Guba and Lincoln (1989) described member checks as “the single most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 239). My study included two member checks. First, the participants were asked to review the data that were collected during the interviews and to sign the data/transcript release form confirming that the transcript was a precise record of the interview and that the interview data accurately represented their points of view. Secondly, I conducted the third interview after I had constructed the first draft of the case so that I could ask participants to suggest ways that I should revise and edit the story so that it accurately represented their experiences. Additionally, participants were asked to examine the conceptual framework during the third interview and assist me in understanding how it described or did not describe their experiences. These processes helped me to ensure that I maintained credibility throughout the course of my research.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the findings of a study are meaningful within a variety of contexts. Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 241) explained that in qualitative research the onus for determining transferability lies with the reader while the responsibility of creating rich detailed descriptions of the research that was undertaken lies with the researcher. If the research findings are represented with

sufficient detail, readers will be able to make informed choices about whether or not the research is transferable to their particular context. While one person's account of his or her transitional experiences might not be generalizable to the entire population, within each story the reader will find similarities with, and differences from, his or her personal experiences. Stake (2005) suggested that "readers examining instrumental case studies are shown how the phenomenon exists within particular cases" (Stake, 2005, p. 458) helping them to make the connections to their own circumstances. Primarily the transferability in this research was attained through detailed description of the research procedures and findings.

Dependability

Dependability describes the confidence with which the methodology and procedures of a research design are able to reveal accurate answers to the research questions. In qualitative inquiry, "methodological changes and shifts in construction are expected products of an emergent design dedicated to increasingly sophisticated constructions" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 242). Dependability was ensured in this study by beginning with a detailed research plan and, then, through the use of journals that documented and explained changes that were implemented as the research developed.

Confirmability

"Confirmability is concerned with assuring that the data, interpretations, and outcomes of the inquiries are rooted in the contexts and persons apart from the [researcher] and are simply not figments of the [researcher's] imagination" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 243). This research ensured confirmability by documenting the process that was used to analyze the data and to develop the cases. The third principle of case

study research that Yin (1989) pointed out was to maintain a chain of evidence. An external observer like the reader should be able to trace the steps taken by the researcher from the beginning to the end. That means that the steps have to be recorded, organized, and described in detail. In this study I ensured confirmability by documenting the process thoroughly and by conducting the third interview which aided confirmability by providing an opportunity for participants to verify that their experiences were reflected accurately in the case and in the conceptual framework.

Ethical Considerations

The University of Saskatchewan Principles and Procedures for Ethics in Human Research (2002) stated that researchers enjoy important freedoms and privileges.

Along with these freedoms are the responsibilities to ensure that research involving human subjects meets high scientific and ethical standards, is an honest and thoughtful inquiry, and involves rigorous analysis and the application of professional standards. (§ 1)

The plans for this study were submitted to the Ethics Review Board and to my committee for rigorous scrutiny of ethical considerations to ensure that participants were not harmed as a result of taking part in this study. As outlined by the University of Saskatchewan Guidelines for Ethics Review of Research Involving Human Subjects the ethical considerations included free and informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, storage of data, dissemination of results, possible risk for participants, and permission for data or transcript release. Based on my proposal for research the Ethics Review Board granted approval from the University of Saskatchewan to proceed. As the study proceeded, the

Board granted further approval for additional time and for the addition of the third interview.

Although this study strived to make certain that the rights of all research participants were protected, participants were informed of a potential for loss of privacy through participation in this study. This risk is possible because the total population of Directors of Education in Saskatchewan is small. So, although I used pseudonyms to protect the privacy of the participants and of their communities, there remains a risk that readers within the educational community in Saskatchewan will identify the details of one or more of the cases. That possibility was explained to participants before they consented to participate in this study (See Appendix D).

Chapter Summary

The methods that I used for this multiple case study were drawn primarily from the work of Yin (1989, 2003). The unique experiences of the four Directors of Education were gathered through a questionnaire, interviews, and direct observation. The cases were analyzed independently and an individual case report was created to describe the experiences of each participant. Then, a comparative analysis allowed me to make connections between the four cases. Chapter 4 will consist of a presentation of the four cases followed by discussions about the implications that each case has for the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation of Data

To understand the transitional experiences of the Directors of Education, the contexts within which those transitions took place, and the strategies that the Directors employed to cope with the transitions, I found it necessary to utilize several different forms of data collection. Chapter 4 presents the data that were collected. The first section outlines the background and the process of the restructuring initiative. This information was compiled from the data that I collected in my interview with the LEADS representative on the Restructuring Coordinating Committee (RCC), from a review of the restructuring bulletins, and from the minutes of the RCC that were provided to me by the interviewee. The next section explores the more general information that I collected about the leaders' transitions through the survey tool. Finally, the case narratives represent a compilation of the interview data and the data collected via participant observation. Following each of the case narratives an explanation building section explains the understandings that I developed by viewing the cases through my conceptual framework and by comparing the cases to each other. In the final section in Chapter 4 I have compared the similarities and differences between the four cases and between the different types of data that I collected to find the emerging themes and divergent perspectives.

Interview with LEADS Representative and Document Analysis

Through the interview with the LEADS representative on the RCC and through a document analysis of the minutes of the RCC and of the thirteen Restructuring Bulletins,

I established an understanding of the background of the restructuring initiative and of the process that was mandated by the province. This contextual information was critical to understanding the experiences of the four Directors of Education who participated in this study.

Background to the Restructuring Initiative

On May 2nd, 2003, Saskatchewan Learning struck the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education to review educational funding in the province. The commission led by Ray Boughen surveyed and consulted people across the province, gathered technical data, and explored previous research that had been conducted in the area. Their mandate was to find the appropriate balance between the funding that was being generated through the local tax base within school divisions and the funding that was provided by the provincial government. Additionally, they were asked to consider the balance between property tax and other forms of taxation that were being used to fund K-12 education, and to assess the impact that the differences between school divisions was having on both students and ratepayers. The commission concluded that Saskatchewan needed to reduce the reliance on property taxes to fund education, and that although it was still appropriate to use a grant system to improve equity, the current Foundational Operating Grant needed to achieve greater simplicity, transparency, and cost validation. Based on those conclusions, the commission recommended that Saskatchewan start by shifting some of the burden for financing education from property

taxes³ to sales taxes. The commission suggested that between 2004 and 2009 the province should be able to change from a system where 60% of the funding for education was raised through local property tax to a system where 80% of educational funding was supplied by the province. Additionally, they recognized that simply changing the taxation system and reworking the Foundational Operating Grant would not fully achieve equity for students and ratepayers. As a result, the report recommended redrawing the school division boundaries to allow for regional tax pooling (Boughen, 2003).

On May 13, 2004, Saskatchewan Learning Minister, Andrew Thompson, made public the provincial government's response to *Finding the Balance: The Final Report from the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education*. In his address, Minister Thompson announced the establishment of the Education Equity Task Force a committee of three members that would be charged with the task of redrawing the school division boundaries given the following criteria:

- There must be no more than 40 school divisions, including minority faith and Francophone Boards.

³ In the 2009 provincial budget, the Government of Saskatchewan introduced changes for funding education in the province. The government announced that they would cut and cap education property tax rates by setting province wide mill rates for residential, commercial, and agricultural classes. The balance of funding for education would be provided through the province's General Revenue Fund (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009).

- Each new school division was to have a per student assessment range such that the division would qualify for a grant, thus eliminating zero grant Boards.
- The enrollment minimum for school divisions outside the North, Lloydminster, and the separate school system was to be 5,000 students.
- There was to be amalgamations of whole school divisions except in unusual circumstances.
- New public school division boundaries were to be contiguous (adjoining).
- Previous voluntary amalgamations were to be represented whenever possible.
- The three northern school divisions and the two Lloydminster school divisions were to remain the same. (Education Equity Task Force, November 2004, p. 4)

The task force began its work by collecting all of the details about the existing school divisions including: enrollment, mill rates, assessment per student, and grant information. Once the task force had compiled accurate data about the existing school divisions they were ready to start thinking about how the boundaries could be redrawn to match the criteria. On August 3, 2004 the task force released a preliminary map, an illustration of how the boundaries might look in the future. The preliminary map served as a starting point for dialogue between the task force and the educational stakeholders in the province.

From this point, the task force met with the Board of Education in each school division in the province and with each of the provincial educational stakeholder

organizations. Additionally, they met with the Catholic Section of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, First Nations representatives, some local boards of trustees, and one parent group. In all the Task Force held 81 consultation meetings across the province. The Task Force also accepted briefs and written submissions for consideration during their deliberations. As a result of their consultations, the task force took into consideration both trading patterns and Health District boundaries where possible.

When the new map was released on November 12, 2004, it included 12 restructured school divisions that ranged in size from 5,143 students to 9,566 students. Using the 2004 assessments and granting formulas, each of the new school divisions qualified for a grant. Therefore, zero grant Boards had been eliminated. The task force also recommended that each of the school divisions should have 10 subdivisions with one Board member for each subdivision. The vision created by the Education Equity Task Force suggested that the number of school divisions in the province be reduced from 81 to 28. The next task was to plan the process that would be used to facilitate the change.

The Process of the Restructuring Initiative

Saskatchewan Learning struck the Restructuring Coordinating Committee (RCC) to advise the government on the process that should be used to facilitate the restructuring initiative. The RCC was a collaborative forum for discussion and included representation from each of the major education stakeholders in the province including: the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the LEADS, the Saskatchewan Association of Business Officials, the Saskatchewan Association of School Councils, and support staff unions.

From the perspective of the LEADS representative the most important issue was the future of LEADS members when the number of school divisions was reduced. In response to this concern, the RCC negotiated an agreement to suspend the portion of the *Provincial Collective Bargaining Agreement* which limits the number of out of scope personnel that can be employed by a school division at one time. After considering the balance between the cost to provide severance pay for the affected individuals and the costs that would be incurred to ensure employment, the RCC advised Saskatchewan Learning that LEADS members should be given the choice to stay and be employed for at least eighteen months to help the new divisions get started. As a result, LEADS members who wished to retire were paid out for the eighteen month period and those who wished to stay were offered positions in a school division office that included all or part of their former division. The LEADS representative explained it like this:

The restructuring committee decided that [to call everyone's resignation] was not a very effective way – not a good way to treat people – when there's lots of work to do. We guaranteed everyone's employment for eighteen months. So, from January 1st of 2006 to June 30th of 2007 all LEADS members...were guaranteed positions in the new divisions with their salaries being paid for by the restructuring fund.

How to handle the contracts of LEADS members was only one of the issues addressed by the RCC. The vast complexity of the task necessitated discussion about a broad spectrum of issues. As a way to communicate their recommendations they created thirteen bulletins (Appendix K) that detailed many of the processes that school divisions would need to use to achieve the restructuring initiative. These bulletins were delivered to the Department

of Learning and with minimal revisions were published as directives for Directors of Education, Business Officials, and School Boards to act upon. The bulletins outlined the step by step process that was followed by the twelve restructured school divisions. More information about the contents of the restructuring bulletins and the internet addresses for the original documents are included in Appendix K. The knowledge of the background and the process of the restructuring initiative was critical for understanding the roles and the expectations of the Directors who were at the centre of this study.

Survey of LEADS Members

The questionnaire, which was distributed through the twelve restructured school divisions to all LEADS members, asked individuals to respond to questions (Appendix E) about the transitions that they had experienced throughout the restructuring process. Although the research population included both Directors and Superintendents from the restructured school divisions, they had the common experience of being appointed to leadership positions in one of the newly created systems. I collected and analyzed the questionnaire data prior to beginning the interviews with the four participants. Therefore, the data that I collected through the questionnaires helped me to have an initial perspective about the patterns and themes that would eventually evolve from the data. Additionally, the questionnaires helped me to identify some of the issues that I needed to clarify before I conducted the interviews. For example, when several survey respondents wrote about their experiences with the hiring process, it prompted me to investigate the details of that event. As a result, when I interviewed the Directors, I was better prepared to understand their experiences with that process. Retrospectively, when I reached the

analysis phase of the study, I used the perspectives of the survey respondents to support and confirm the data that I collected through the interview process.

The survey respondents stressed the importance of interpersonal relationships during the restructuring process. They reported that success in the new division was often the result of the people working together. One respondent explained that the transitions were easier as a result of “many good people in the new school division who were all in the same boat.” Another respondent attributed the success to “hiring excellent Superintendents and administrative assistants and having a strong Board chairperson.” On the other hand, they reported the disappointment that they experienced from losing connections with former colleagues in their past school divisions. One Director pointed out that he or she felt the need to “detach from some personal relationships from within the former school division so that all new members on the team had equal footing.” Additionally, the respondents described the importance of their support networks and the stress that was placed on families who were required to move. For example, one person wrote this:

I moved offices and moved from my acreage and my community to another centre. I left friends, colleagues, and peers behind to start new relationships. My kids were comfortable in their old school and community. They were forced to start fresh in a new community, too.

When asked what made those transitions easier, another respondent simply stated, “The people in the new school division – especially the LEADS members and the division office in-scope team that I worked closely with.” Each survey item elicited descriptions of relationships as a critical component of the transition process.

Feelings of loss and uncertainty were also communicated strongly through the questionnaire responses. For example, individuals who were involved in the hiring process for Directors of Education described the strong emotions that were stirred by that experience. One person suggested that the “very uncaring Director search was meat-market-like.” Someone else used the word “brutal” to describe the hiring phase. Logically, I realized that a process that was designed to reduce the number of Directors in the province from eighty-one to twenty-eight would evoke feelings of uncertainty for the individuals who were Directors prior to the restructuring initiative. The feelings of loss and uncertainty continued to surface throughout the transition process. Several respondents, who were required to change roles, were left with a feeling that they had lost their connection to the educational process. One respondent explained it like this, “I lost some of my direct connection with schools which was, and still is, a difficult adjustment. I spend much more time in my office than in schools.” Another individual described his or her discomfort with the unknown elements of the new environment:

The transitions for me were initially large....I started to work in a very different culture and environment. I also had to change the community in which I lived. I now travel much more. The change process for me was substantial....The fear of the unknown was the most difficult to manage but, with time, it has lessened greatly.

Uncertainty evolved from shifting relationships, from the changing roles, and from the complexity of the task. Each question on the survey evoked a description of the uncertainty that individuals felt during the transition process. For some respondents it was an emotional experience. This respondent shared those personal challenges openly:

I left my former colleagues and had to acquaint myself with new ones. I sold my home and lived in a rental accommodation until I found a new one. I am further away from family and former friends than I was before. I have lost the network of interagency personnel and supports. However, these are minor inconveniences compared to my current feeling that the job is so big. We are building and flying at the same time. I cannot take personal time for my personal life and still do an adequate job of my job. I worry at times that I will not pay enough attention to a sign that is predicting a disaster and that the disaster may occur due to my oversight or my ability to attend to the issue in a timely way. The old situation was, overall, less complex because there were fewer agencies, families, and students with needs....

Many respondents described the feelings of loss and uncertainty that were associated with their transitions. One respondent summed up those feelings by listing five changes from the past to the present. "I have gone from known to unknown, expertise to incompetence, relationships to mistrust, comfort to discomfort, and routine to chaos." Respondents balanced their perceptions of uncertainty with their perspectives of opportunities that evolved within the change environment.

The questionnaire responses described how the change environment permitted new opportunities to emerge and sighted key elements that led to success in the change process. One respondent explained that new processes needed to be developed because "old systems did not work in the new organization." Another respondent explained that "creating a new school division meant that there were opportunities to do things differently, to question how things have always been done before, and to make a new

path.” Respondents pointed out that a great deal of the success evolved from people working collaboratively. Several suggested that experience in education and experience with past amalgamations helped them to make the transitions more easily. One respondent explained that past experience spawned an attitude of we’ve “been there and done that. It takes a lot of work but we can do it.” Others credited the leadership of their Director of Education. For example, one respondent said, “I believe that the transitions became easier because of the leadership of our Director. His experience and ability to make our new roles manageable made our quality of life much better.” Overall, the data collected through the questionnaire illustrated the progression of transitional experiences over time. One respondent said that although it was difficult to pinpoint the exact moment that he or she felt the new beginning, “it was like a sunrise on a cloudy day. It just got lighter.”

Cases

Leaders in a change environment have a unique perspective from which to consider transitions. As an individual, the leader experiences the impact of the organizational change and is forced to evolve to stay in tune with the new environment. As a manager, he or she is held accountable for guiding co-workers and subordinates through the transitions that are necessary to ensure that the change initiative is successful. Finally, as a leader, the individual is responsible for creating and maintaining the vision for the change that serves as the catalyst for the transitions. This study focused primarily on the leader’s personal transitions rather than on his or her role as the transition manager or the organizational designer. The four cases illustrated that leaders and leadership are firmly linked to each of these viewpoints of transitions. Therefore, the case descriptions

include detailed accounts of each leader's personal transitions, transition management considerations, and organizational design decisions.

Due to their internal, and therefore implicit, nature, participants found transitions difficult to articulate explicitly. The stories of how the Directors experienced their transitions were cloaked in the stories of the change process. As a result, the narratives that I have presented in this Chapter are presented in a detailed manner to allow the reader to interact with the experiences of the participants and to understand the emergence of the transitional journeys from within the participants' stories of organizational restructuring.

Following each case I have documented Yin's (2003) multiple case study analysis technique of explanation building. The explanation building section, following each narrative, describes the progression of my understanding as I moved from case to case through the data. The cases included similarities that helped me to understand how the Directors experienced transitions. The cases also included differences that provided me with information about how their unique contexts affected the individual Directors' transitions and about what strategies each of them used to navigate through his or her personal transitions.

The four Directors of Education at the centre of this study were located in school divisions throughout the province. Each of them had previous experience in the role of Director of Education. Two of them accepted positions outside of the divisions where they were living at the time that the restructuring process began. That meant that they needed to change residences before they started their new jobs. Each of the amalgamations involved bringing four or more school divisions together to form one

larger school division. The individual Director's experiences were unique, and yet, when considered together, threads of similarity are certainly present in each of the four cases. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the privacy of all individuals and communities described in the cases. However, the research population for this study is small and all members of the population are known to each other and to other members of the educational community within the province of Saskatchewan. Therefore, the interview consent form contained the following statement: "Because the participants for this study have been selected from a small group of people, all of whom are known to each other, it is possible that you may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what you have said." The risk of being identified was discussed with participants in both the first and the third interviews.

Alexis

Alexis was one of only a few women who were charged with the responsibility of leading one of the new school divisions through the restructuring process. She had worked in education as a teacher, a principal, and a Director of Education. She had previously experienced two smaller amalgamations. To be closer to the office in the new school division, Alexis moved from one community to another.

Background

To understand Alexis's stories about her transitions more fully, it was important to develop an understanding of Alexis prior to the beginning of her transitional experiences. This section details some of her background including information about her childhood, family and school experiences, her post-secondary education and work experience, and her spouse and family.

Childhood, family, and school experiences. Alexis was the second oldest child in her family and she reported that her parents seemed to recognize both her academic ability and her leadership ability. They guided her to pursue the development of those talents. She explained that although she was the only one in her family to go on to post-secondary education, she felt as though her parents expected her to attend university.

I think, as a young child, [my parents] sort of tagged me as the one that had the interest and ability perhaps, I am not sure, but, it was not an option. I mean, my family did those things that you hear are good, practical things to do with kids. [They asked], ‘What University do you think you’ll go to?’ It wasn’t, ‘Are you?’ It was, ‘You are.’

Alexis clarified that there were other things that she learned from growing up in a small town and the small rural school where she attended both elementary school and high school. “It’s like living in a fish bowl. That’s all you know. And so, you don’t recognize how significant some of those things are until you leave.” As an example, she provided her experience with Students’ Representative Council (SRC),

One of the things that I think is significant in my growing up and taking on leadership roles was my involvement in the SRC....I became the president...took on leadership, was very involved in the school and very involved in the community...a small community. I think it is conducive to those kinds of opportunities for kids. So, those growing up pieces, I think contributed to a great degree to who I became.

Alexis's experiences growing up in a family where she was encouraged to excel both in academics and in leadership; and in a small community that recognized her strengths helped her to prepare for her future in educational leadership.

Training and experience. When Alexis finished high school she attended university and completed a Bachelor of Education degree and became a teacher. During the time that she was a classroom teacher, Alexis continued to take classes and completed her Bachelor of Arts degree. During her first principalship, she completed her Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction.

Although her career path eventually led to educational administration, she noted that she did not aspire to be an administrator. Instead, she explained that her move into administration happened when the opportunity presented itself. Although Alexis may not have planned the move to administration, it was suggested to her by her first principal during a post-conference discussion.

He said, 'I think you should be a principal.' ...Now, when I look back on that conversation, it was quite telling. I know that principal wasn't the kind of a man that would say that to [just] anybody. So, I guess that was significant for me because when the position of principal came up, you know, I thought about that comment.

In retrospect she understood that the principalship offered her a great possibility for learning. "I do not think there's any position that has a greater learning curve than that of principal." To accentuate the learning curve, the school to which she was first assigned the role of principal is now designated a community school. "It wasn't designated in

those days because we didn't have designations back then. It is designated now but we lived in a community school world which was a huge learning curve for me, as well."

Spouse and family. Alexis's husband was also an educator and educational leader. During the earlier part of her career, they relocated frequently as her husband moved into higher administrative positions. Her career path was similar to his only slightly delayed. She explained, "I was a teacher when he was a principal. I was a principal when he was a Director. I was a Director when he was a Regional Director." She went on to explain that she always tried to look for a position "30 miles down the road to the next school division" to avoid conflict of interest for her husband in his position. Looking back, she saw this period of constant change as an opportunity.

I had the opportunity...I'll say that now, although I didn't think it then...to follow my husband around, and so, I taught every grade. I taught just about every subject - change every couple of years. So it was constant; understanding that my world was ever-changing. I would never have even thought that you could laminate a lesson plan, because I never was there long enough. It was just that kind of change. It was part of my life. And I got to really enjoy that change, and, so that's been part of who I am too. It was an opportunity because I did have vast experience around many kinds of schools, ages of children, subject areas, and I developed a real knowledge around curriculum which still is one of my passions, and a real belief around learning, and students.

In addition to instigating frequent relocations of their family home, which provided Alexis with first hand knowledge about the change process and with a variety of educational experiences and roles, her husband was her mentor. Because they both

worked in education, they debated and debriefed many difficult situations in educational leadership.

[We engaged in] lots of professional dialogue, and sharing of...professional experience together. He really is my mentor. There's no question about it, when I think about the mentor role, and that's just coincidence. So, along with that mentorship, there was lots of learning.

Alexis explained that although she often sought her husband's counsel, she did not always follow his advice.

You have to do what you think is right, in your context. And you may be the only one who really knows all of that. But it was important conversation. It allowed me to rule out options, right?...So, that's again, the role of a mentor, I think. It's not to give you the answer but to help you brainstorm options.

Alexis and her husband have three children. Alexis explained that her family has helped her to stay grounded throughout her career. She described herself as someone who has trouble maintaining the work/life balance and said that she knows that being a mom over the years has helped her to set some priorities at home. "I don't have a very good balance in my life sometimes, but thank goodness, I have people in my life who bring me back."

Transitions Begin with an Ending

According to Bridges (2003) transitions begin with an ending. Alexis's experience illustrated that concept well. This section outlines several events that signaled the ending of the old reality for Alexis including the announcement of restructuring, the release of the new school division boundaries map, the hiring of Directors for the new

school divisions, and her appointment as a Superintendent in Long River School Division.

The announcement and the Education Equity Task Force. For Alexis, like all of the participants, the restructuring process really began with Minister of Education, Andrew Thompson's May 13, 2004 announcement that the province would undertake the restructuring of school division boundaries. On May 19, 2004 members of the Education Equity Task Force were named and charged with the task of re-drawing the boundaries map. In August, the Education Equity Task Force published a proposed boundaries map that would serve as the basis for their discussions as they toured the province and met with school Boards and other major educational stakeholders. At that time, two communities in Alexis's former school division, Maple School Division, presented their case to the Task Force and asked to be included in a school division closer to the major centre of Ashcroft in which they did most of their business.

They made a presentation [to the Education Equity Task Force], in our Board office at that time. They wanted to come up to this area...as a community, [they] made that presentation to the government, and said, 'We would prefer...' They were granted that little jog in the map.

For Alexis this was a significant sign of the changes that would come with restructuring. However, when the request of these two communities was granted in the final map, it became significant in a different way. It also meant that Alexis had the option of guaranteed employment within either of the new organizations that included schools from Maple School Division.

The map and elections of the Board of Education. Throughout the summer and fall of 2004 the Education Equity Task Force talked with people around the province and in November 2004 their final map was unveiled by Minister Thompson. The new school divisions became legal entities in April of 2005 and elections for the Boards were held on June 15. The elections in Rolling Hills School Division, the newly restructured school division that would include a majority of Alexis's schools, were the next significant sign of the impending transitions for Alexis. First of all, the sub-division map for the school division ruled out the possibility of any more than two members from her former Board being re-elected. In the end, only one member of the former Board was successfully elected to serve in Rolling Hills School Division. The second Board position went to someone who would be a Board of Education member for the first time. Alexis recognized that this would have an impact on the hiring process for Director of Education and on how the new system was structured.

At the end of June 2005, the Local Teachers' Association in Maple School Division held a celebration to honor members who had dedicated many years of service. In addition to honoring teachers in the system, the teachers seized the opportunity to honor Alexis with a plaque on which the inscription read, "Success for all, Alexis, you made it happen!" Alexis was delighted. Her comments illustrated how she felt at that moment:

Well, it brings tears to my eyes right now, because that to me is more powerful than somebody saying, you're that vision of a leader. I don't care about being a vision of a leader, but if I can make that difference and not just me thinking I

made a difference, but that was the teachers' group in the system, telling me that they think I made a difference.

That moment was a significant event in the ending of the old reality for Alexis. During the next six to eight months she would experience many emotions while the changes took place.

The hiring process for Directors of Education. Alexis had worked as a principal and then Director in the same area for many years. The restructuring, in fact, joined together several of her former school divisions. As a result, she envisioned herself as the leader of Rolling Hills School Division. In her words,

[Compared to other applicants in the pool] I had the most experience as a Director. I had a very successful career with the Boards that I had worked with in [that area]. I had actually worked in most of those legacy⁴ systems in that particular new school division. So, I had developed a lot of relationships with people, I thought that would be an advantage, you know all those logical, rational things.

That vision of herself as Director of Education in Rolling Hills School Division led Alexis to apply for a directorship only in that school division rather than applying for positions in several of the newly restructured divisions. This decision made sense because she was not interested in relocating.

⁴ The term legacy board was used commonly within the 2006 Saskatchewan rural school division restructuring initiative to refer to the Boards of Education from the school divisions that were amalgamated to form the larger school division.

I still had a daughter; still do have a daughter in high school. That was a big thing for me, actually; that personal consideration. I really didn't want to move her. She would have been going into grade ten, and you know, had been with that group of friends since grade two, and I didn't want to move her again.

In addition to her daughter being settled in school, Alexis's husband continued to work in the area around Abbott. However, he was somewhat flexible because his job already included a great deal of driving.

The Board in Rolling Hills School Division chose to participate in the provincial hiring process that was organized by the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. The interviews, held over a two day period, involved several Boards interviewing at the same time in hotels in Saskatoon and Regina. When the hiring process took place, "there were way more factors considered than the ones that [Alexis] would have seen as the logical, rational ones." This illustrated that a new reality was emerging in education in Saskatchewan. The new larger school divisions were different from the old legacy systems with which Alexis was familiar.

The end result was that Alexis was not hired in Rolling Hills School Division. She was devastated:

[I] just couldn't rationalize the 'why', it didn't make sense to me, at that point, thinking of it logistically and rationally and the ego thing, too, you know, you're hurt. There's some emotion attached to it, you put a lot of time and effort into these jobs and, it's a statement. You take it personally. Does that mean I wasn't doing the things I should have been doing? In fact, I don't think it had anything to do with that, when I look back on it now.

Alexis was able to understand in retrospect that “Boards were thinking about other things than just the old traditional: experience, qualifications, and performance.”

Superintendent role becomes an option. Shortly after the hiring process for Directors was complete, members of the League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents (LEADS) held their annual summer short course in Waskesieu. Alexis recounted this as a difficult time for the group with some people who were extremely happy because they had been hired, others who were confused because they had been hired in a division other than the one within which they were currently working, and yet others, like herself, who were disappointed because they had been unsuccessful in the hiring process. The workshop illustrated that the changes were difficult for LEADS members but also for their spouses. Alexis explained that her husband chose not to attend the workshop that year. “My husband actually opted not to go to the LEADS workshop, because, and he was right, he just wasn’t ready.” He was her mentor, her family, and her biggest supporter and the obstacle created by Alexis not being hired to be the Director in Rolling Hills School Division was difficult for him, too.

It was during this LEADS Summer Short Course that Alvin Buchannan, the new Director of Long River School Division, the school division in which Alexis eventually became the Director of Education, approached her about joining the team in that division. Although at this early stage there were still some uncertainties about the rules for building the school division teams, it was the general understanding that LEADS members could be positioned in any school division which included at least one of their former schools. In Alexis’s case, the two schools who had appealed to the Education Equity Task Force to be included in a different division had been integrated into Long

River School Division when the boundaries were restructured. Following the short course, the Director from Long River School Division called her to formally request that she agree to join the team in his division as a Superintendent. She was also invited by the Director of Rolling Hills School Division to accept a Superintendent position in that division. Alexis was left with two possibilities for employment.

Alexis went through a period of “soul searching” while she made the decision about which role to accept. In Rolling Hills School Division she faced working with a Board, who for one reason or another had not selected her to be the Director of Education, and working with a Director, who had been selected for the job instead of her. On the other hand, accepting the job in Long River School Division necessitated uprooting her daughter at an important time in her adolescent development. In the end, she decided to take the job in Long River School Division and to move her family and start fresh.

The Neutral Zone Is Characterized by Uncertainty

Unfortunately, the move to the new job in the new school division was not quite as simple as starting the new role at the beginning of the school year in the new school division. Until the end of December 2005, she was still the Director of Education in Maple School Division, her former school division. The Board of Education for Rolling Hills School Division selected the Maple School Division office as the office that would house the Rolling Hills School Division and the person who was selected as the Director of Education for Rolling Hills School Division moved in down the hall from Alexis. Yet, people continued to see her as the educational leader in the area and frequently came to her with questions about the new division. Because she had selected not to stay in the

area, she was not privy to many of the discussions about Rolling Hills School Division and was forced to direct their questions elsewhere. She recounted the awkwardness of that time period in both of the first two interviews. In the first interview, she explained that in the period between September 2005 and January 2006 her role of Director in Maple School Division was characterized more by stewardship than by leadership. She also explained that it felt awkward to be the figurehead from the old organization waiting for the new organization to take over:

[I] maintained the [Maple School Division] system up to that point. So that was the work, the overlapping work of the Board. The new Board was responsible for getting their organizational chart in place, getting offices determined, and so on. They were doing that work at the same time as the old systems were housekeeping to January 1. So it really was housekeeping, we weren't doing new initiatives or new work. [We were] just kind of keeping the ship floating but there was awkwardness to that...because in my case, the new Board was operating in our office and the new Director was down the hall from me. Those were all pieces that people tried to deal with, I think, sensitively and you tried to respond sensitively, but, you know there's some angst in all of that. So that was all happening at the same time, and then as you make decisions,...not to stay there...there's a little bit of tension in that.

In the second interview, Alexis's voice changed somewhat as she explained the uncertainty and emotion of that time period:

The in-between time, between the hiring and January 1, when you actually physically moved, was a very difficult time, I think, for lots of people because

you were between the worlds....That was an awkward time, just because you felt a little helpless, hopeless....I was still Director of [Maple School Division] in that care-taking six months. That's also a really awkward place to be, because you're not doing anything really, you're care-taking until the new Board takes over and that's not really the function of a leader. Right? It's kind of a limbo-land. It was kind of a double negative, in a way, in that you're being sort of contained in your leadership, and people are looking to you for leadership. So, it really is a no-win situation. And there's lots of emotion....There's all that uncertainty. [You] just do not know. You can't know...and six months of not knowing is a long time.

New School Division Becomes Operational in January 2006

Although Alexis's transition had already begun prior to January 2006, the official opening of the new school division initiated many changes and therefore many transitions. This section explains the personal and work transitions that Alexis experienced as she adjusted to her new role in the new school division.

Personal transitions. January 1, 2006 came quickly enough and with it came more changes that were both personal and professional. Her new position as Superintendent in Long River School Division required that she move from Abbott to Ashcroft, a much larger community located approximately one hour and twenty minutes away by car. Moving mid-way through the school year seemed like a poor choice for her high school aged daughter, so Alexis found a small apartment near the school division office. She drove home to be with her family on weekends and one night in the middle of the week. The rest of the time she worked night and day and really only used the apartment to sleep. It was a difficult time. Alexis recalled that several of the people at the school division

office went through similar experiences during this time. In addition to the strain of being at new jobs in a brand new organization they dealt with the extra pressure that had been placed on their families at home as a result of the work related changes in their lives.

Finally in March, Alexis and her husband purchased a home in Ashcroft but she still only slept on a mattress in the corner of the bedroom and continued to live mostly between the school division office and her home in her former community.

So, I'm living in a corner of the bedroom...It was a very different time. March, April, May and June-actually, I spent four months there. Did that go by fast though? Because we were so busy here, I literally went home and slept on that cot and was back here, the minute I woke up. I mean, I did not spend a minute. There was no television; there was no anything in that house. So, you know, like cooking utensils were to a minimum, so everything was here [at the Long River School Division office]. I lived here, which in some ways, got us up and running quicker.

In January her father-in-law, who had been living with her family for some time, passed away.

When I look at this, there was just a lot going on at that same time. In my world, my husband's Dad passed away. In the fall, he'd been ill and actually he had been living with us.

Her husband was the executor of the will and was required to travel out of province to take care of the details. This left her daughter at home alone in Abbott. Although the memorial service was delayed until summer, she noted that the event added stress and responsibility to the turmoil of the time period.

Work transitions. At work there were other stressors. She was in a new community working with new people. Together they undertook all of the tasks that were required to maintain the business of the schools while they created the new organization. Over the Easter break in March 2006, the Director became ill while he was away on holidays. In response to his illness and his need to take time off, he appointed Alexis to be the Acting Director. Although they had not planned this previously, she was the only one of the superintendents who had past experience as a Director and it made sense that she was the one that would be most comfortable in the position. Alvin recovered and returned to work but only two weeks later he announced his retirement from his position in a mutual agreement with the Board of Education. Alexis was once again appointed the Acting Director.

The Board of Education chose to engage in a full scale hiring method seeking applicants from across the country. They opted to employ an outside consulting agency to facilitate the task of hiring a new Director. Working with the hiring agency was a long procedure that took them from June until November before the final decision was made. Once again, Alexis went through a period of soul searching while she decided whether or not she wanted to apply for the job. She was faced with the memories of being turned down for the job that she applied for in the initial hiring process and with the knowledge that the Board of Education had chosen to engage in a full scale hiring procedure now rather than opting for a more expedient method that would endorse her as the new Director. She needed to consider each of those factors but in the end she decided that she needed to apply for the position.

Alexis felt that she understood the challenges of the school division better than a new person would. She knew that even if she was to go back to her role as a Superintendent, she would still be personally affected by the challenges that lay ahead for the organization. Finally, she understood that if she applied, and if she was hired, that the continuity of leadership would be a great asset to the organization.

Change does not take place in a vacuum. During the time that the hiring process was being facilitated, Alexis and her family sold their old home in Abbott and moved permanently to Ashcroft. Her daughter started in her new school and her husband changed jobs. At work, the business of the school division continued to go on and once again she found herself in a caretaking role while she awaited the outcome of the hiring process. Although she understood that significant organizational changes needed to be undertaken, she felt like it would be unwise to direct the organization on to a new path before she found out whether or not she would be hired for the position. She felt that it would be detrimental to the organization to begin to change in one direction only to find out that another new leader chose to lead in yet another direction.

In November 2006, Alexis was hired as the Director of Education. She felt strongly that she needed to honor the progress that had been made under the leadership of Alvin Buchannan, but also, that she needed to ensure that the division moved forward. Although the school division had employed the assistance of a facilitator during the early stages of the amalgamation process, Alexis felt that the help of a different facilitator to help the division get back on track would be helpful. The group facilitation was successful and it brought the Board closer together and allowed them to engage more efficiently in the business of the school division.

Repatterning Helps the Organization to Adapt to the Needs of the New System

Alexis shared several examples of the iterative processes that Long River School Division experienced in order to adapt to their new environment. She explained that they needed to continue to make adjustments to their systems until the systems met the needs of the organization. Bridges (2003) referred to this process as repatterning. This section describes several examples of repatterning that Alexis shared during her interviews.

Board relationships and school closure. From the beginning of her appointment as Director of Education, Alexis recognized the importance of establishing firm parameters around the relationship between her and the Board and the importance of building a united voice within the Board. The new facilitator helped the group to define clearly the role of the Board and the role of the Director.

This is your work and this is the Director's work. When the Board is trying to do the Director's work, or the Director is trying to do the Board's work, that's when you get into trouble.

Alexis believed that the work with the new facilitator helped the relationship between her and the Board to grow. However, the relationship was tested when the group engaged in school reviews to determine the viability of the schools that were currently operating within their school division boundaries. Both the Board and the Director understood from the outset that school closure would be an emotional issue for community members. Alexis counseled the Board to look at the reviews in a purposeful manner, to specify the criteria for closing schools, to apply the criteria logically, and to be clear about the processes that would be employed for school closure.

...my job was to make sure that the Board had all the information....Their job is to make the decision....That's my advice to them: don't make it political, don't make it emotional, make it rational....When you've got that many schools, you need to make sure that you're consistent...fair, rational, logical, because when you're asked...you've got an answer. If it's political,...that's much, much more difficult to respond to. So, we had developed templates and structures to walk them through the process to guide them in decision-making, and all of that was done very, individually and very confidentially, because ultimately they have to make those decisions themselves....

By the end of the review, the Board of Education in Long River School Division elected to close 8 schools. This was the most schools closed by any Board in the province during that time period. In one respect, Alexis felt that the school closure process had been an illustration of success for the Board. The logical criteria based process that she had suggested had helped them to be confident in their school closure decisions and the work that they had done with the facilitator had helped them to move on from those decisions with a united voice. However, when parents in the communities erupted in anger over school closure, the Board lost its united front and got caught in political lobbying. Alexis knew that they would need to start team building once again.

Connecting with schools. The Board was not the only group in the school division that Alexis needed to bring together. In the fall of 2007, she recognized the need for schools to be more closely connected to the division office and she rearranged the responsibilities of the Superintendents so that individuals were assigned to specific schools rather than being assigned only to their areas of expertise.

They were experts in their areas. That was the upside to it. They were creating consistency and equity across the system in their respective areas. That's a good thing. The downside was, 'how do you structure it to connect it to the schools better?' And we're still tweaking that to try to accomplish that better. It's definitely been an area this year. The Superintendents have all been given a grouping of schools. And so, now they've each got about eight schools.

Alexis confirmed that although this new system was working better, there were still adaptations that needed to be made.

Now, I'm thinking we've got it there and we haven't got quite the right mathematical mix. I just divided [the schools] up and split them between the Superintendents and what I'm discovering is there are some Superintendent portfolios that aren't as enabling for them to get out to schools, as others.

Alexis also confirmed that the model for assigning Superintendents to schools in the system would be adapted through trial and error until they have found a solution that works for the organization.

Communication and interpersonal relationships. Alexis also recognized that forming and maintaining relationships in the new system was significantly different from the old system. She explained that interpersonal connections "were always the part that I grieved losing and now, our struggle is to find a way to connect. It's going to be different but it's always important." To illustrate this problem, she described the experience of meeting a teacher from the school division in the mall. While she knew that the teacher would recognize her and expect some recognition in return, she had to come to terms

with the fact that she was unable know the name or the role of each of the individuals working within such a large system.

You will never get to know them. It was about month three that it dawned on me, I'll never know everybody the way that I used to. I still grieve that some. But, I set my sights in a more realistic way, and it was my goal was to know every administrator. And that happened pretty quickly, you know, that was a group of about eighty of us at that time. That was do-able. So, I do know the administrators fairly well now.

However, knowing the in-school administrators was not quite enough; she also acknowledged a need for better communication with both schools and in-school administrators. To address these two issues she changed the format of the Administrators' meetings and she started to publish a regular newsletter that went out to schools to establish more direct communication between the school division office and the teachers. The challenges of communication needed to be modified until a structure was found that worked effectively for the organization.

Collaboration and unilateral decision making. Alexis explained that they were still working on the challenges associated with making connections and getting people working together in such a large system. She pointed out that working collaboratively was difficult.

Things have changed. Number one, people want more input. Collaborative work is much more the norm. And number two, the size of this system, 'How do you do collaboration with twelve hundred employees?'

With some decisions they opted to use focus group discussions to gather some input from stakeholders but in Alexis's words, "It's not collaborative the way you thought collaborative was." Although the focus groups represented a step towards allowing greater input into the organization, "no matter how inclusive you are, you are excluding a lot of people and those that are excluded may not even be aware" of the effort that was being made.

She identified several examples that illustrated that they were making progress towards their goal of getting people working together. Their work within the Continuous Improvement Framework (Saskatchewan Learning, 2005) had helped them to align goals throughout the system. She found that there were times when it was important to collaborate, even though collaborative processes were much more challenging within the larger context. She also found that there were times when it was important for her as the Director to make firm decisions. She used the formation of the school division's teacher librarian model to exemplify a time when she had to stand firm behind her decision.

[There was] lots of pushback and I guess in time I might look at this differently but I made some executive decisions about how you would move forward on that front because I know the research. I know Saskatchewan Learning is telling us 'thou shalt have teacher-librarians'. So it wasn't an option.

The combined elements of collaboration, communication, and strong leadership helped to get everyone working together.

Culture building: Establishing common practices among diverse groups. Alexis used the process that the division used to develop the school division's teacher supervision model to exemplify the challenges that transpired as a result of the huge

diversity between the groups of people who were joined together to form Long River School Division. Additionally, she used this example to illustrate how capacity increased with the formation of the new larger school divisions.

You have to have a plan in place for that whole supervision cycle in a school. So, the good news is the plan that we're developing is better than we've had before. In that now, we use research, right? The current better practices around this particular area. But you know, here's the other interesting element, for us, for sure with the size of our system, we've got such diversity. We've got some schools that are probably very close to that better practice because they had been evolving there. We've got other schools coming from legacy systems where school-based administrators didn't do any of the supervision of staff. So, what a huge learning for an administrator, who has never done this before, compared to an administrator, who had done a fair bit of it.

In the area of teacher supervision, like many other focal points within the organizational transition, establishing common practices throughout the school division proved to be one of the most complicating factors because the practices that had been implemented by each of the legacy school systems varied greatly.

Leadership strategies evolve through the transition process. Alexis reflected on the evolution of leadership during the period of restructuring. She explained that in the first stage she tried to attend to everything. "Then you discover that it's not very effective or efficient." So, she started to prioritize the urgent and important items. Then, in the third stage, she explained that she actually needed to let some things "fall off her plate." There was just too much to do. "When the dust settles and you're back into operational,

you go back to that kind of leadership [where you] prioritize and so on.” Alexis restated the perspective that it was important to prioritize and accept that not everything would be completed.

The Superintendents are working night and day, and they can’t get it all done.

For people who tend to take pride in doing a job well, that’s a frustration. You never feel like you’re doing it as well as you did before. Although you know you’re doing fifty more things than you ever have done before, it’s that angst of knowing the kinds of things you need to do and not having the time to do them all. And not well, certainly.

The frustration experienced by the senior leadership team in Long River School Division led them to understand that they needed to be definite about their priorities because there just was not enough time to do all of the things that needed to be done.

Clear vision is crucial for organizational development. Alexis referred to the important role of organizational vision several times during her interview. Generally she remarked,

The one that I find interesting is the vision piece. And that I see different people tackling in different ways. For me that vision piece was just part of my evolving as a leader. And it started in the school as a principal, I learned at the school site that as a staff we needed to have a common understanding of what was important.

She also stated that she understood that it was important to maintain the vision that the Board had created during the time that Alvin Buchannan was Director. They established ‘Learning and Leadership in Life’ as their mission. “Its how you bring those words to life that is important to me.” She related that it was important to others within the

organization to know, understand, and participate in the vision. “I believe firmly that it has got to be front and center. I think that’s how you go forward. And you know, as much as for some parts of our school division that was new, it is what I was hearing people say they needed.” Finally, Alexis concluded that “if [as a Director] you don’t have a vision of the benefit of this restructured school division, you’re in the wrong position.” A vision for positive growth was important for the organization and for all individuals within the organization including the leader.

Change takes place in three phases. She explained that she has experienced three phases of the change process. “The first level was really the organizational piece”. The second phase, the one that she placed the organization in at the time, has allowed them to address issues surrounding the schools “but in a more broad-based way.” In the third phase, they will address individual school items and that is “when you start to have an impact for kids directly.”

Alexis’s past experiences helped her to understand the change process. Although she stressed that change is always unpredictable and uncomfortable, it is important to know that it always follows a similar pattern.

You develop an understanding of the change pattern. So, it is not fearful for you.

You know it’s going to dip and you know there is a light at the end of the tunnel all the time. And, it will get better.

On the other hand, she cautioned that it is impossible to know what is required in a new situation. She had experienced two prior amalgamations but she was unprepared for the work that would be required to make this one successful.

This new world of restructuring was so significantly different from the other two smaller restructuring [initiatives] that it's been a brand new learning about how you do the work around restructuring. And we still haven't got it right. We're still trying to work through that piece.

Alexis openly acknowledged the difficulties of the change process and the difficulties of the transitions associated with change but she understood that in the end it would get better. This belief helped her to keep working during trying times.

Adaptive behaviour is the key to working through the changes. Alexis acknowledged the adaptive nature of the work of bringing together several different cultures and forming a new organization:

We're inventing it on the fly. Let's face it, nobody's got a manual. We're all doing this on the fly, learning as we go. I think that's part of the power of it.

We're learning as we go. We're revising all the time.

Alexis explained that this concept of creating the organization while it was operational required a type of trial and error repatterning where systems were continuously revised until they better met the needs of the organization. She illustrated this concept when she described the way they made changes to the administrative meetings, the role of the Board of Education, collaboration, and communication.

The New Beginning Takes Shape

During an interview in October 2007, a year and ten months after the official opening of the school division and a full year after Alexis became the Director of Education, Alexis was able to reflect on the current status of the school division restructuring and on some of the things that she had learned along the way. While the

division was still experiencing some challenges, they were beginning to see some signs of success.

The long and arduous restructuring process tested her belief that there was always a light at the end of the tunnel but by October 2007 she could see some evidence. With the Board of Education she was still working on teambuilding and on creating a united voice but they were beginning to move into the third phase of change. That meant that they were finding more time to focus on the work of running the school division. They were setting priorities for the school division that honored their mission statement and that had a real impact on children and learning. She made two statements that addressed the success of the restructuring initiative both within the school division and within the province. She explained that in the school division,

It's a challenging world, but I still maintain, it's a very exciting one because this is truly the piece of my career where I'm seeing more possibilities than I've ever seen before, in terms of truly impacting student learning.

She stated that, in her opinion, the positive impact of the restructuring initiative in the province was

...taking us miles ahead of where we were in our smaller systems...we are the same people but we didn't really have the capacity to do that deeper work and now we do. And we have the opportunity. We're talking about changing the norm, not the exception.

Explanation Building: Alexis's Case

In each of the explanation building sections that follow the case narratives, I have described what I learned about transitions as a result of interacting with each of the cases.

Additionally, in each of the explanation building sections that follow the remaining cases, I have included a description of what I learned by comparing that particular case to the one or the ones that I analyzed before it. However, since Alexis's case was the first one that I worked with, the following description includes only information that I learned from her particular story.

I began working through each case simply by listening to the recording of the three interviews while reading the type written transcription. Next, I repeated that process stopping to extract quotations from the transcript that I felt represented a piece of information that was important to the case analysis. I looked for items that indicated how the individual had experienced transitions, how the context had affected the individual's transitions, specific strategies that the individual had implemented to navigate the transitions, and information that was connected to any of the dimensions described by the conceptual framework. Once I had separated these quotations, I used them in three ways: a) I gathered similar statements together so that I could begin to understand the nature of the individual's experiences, b) I arranged them chronologically to facilitate the creation of the narrative of the Director's transitional journey, and c) I transferred the points on to sticky notes to create the wall charts that allowed me to compare and contrast the four cases to build an understanding of their similarities and differences. Once I had completed those steps, I wrote the first draft of the narrative. As a technique to view Alexis's case through the conceptual framework, I created diagrams with the major points of her transitional journey superimposed on the diagram of the conceptual framework. This section describes the understandings that I developed through my analysis of Alexis's case.

Using the conceptual framework as a lens through which to view Alexis's transitions helped me to understand how she had experienced the ending, the neutral zone and the beginning as they were described by Bridges (2001) and Woodward & Buchholz (1987). Alexis pointed out several components of the ending that were significant for her: the request by two communities to join a different division, the Board of Education elections that only elected one person from her previous Board, her unsuccessful bid to be Director of Education in her home area, and the Local Teachers' Association presenting her with a plaque to honor her service. The ending definitely took up a large amount of her focus at the beginning of the process.

As her journey progressed and she moved into the neutral zone, she described her experiences as being uncertain and unpredictable, both feelings that were identified in the literature review (Bridges, 2003; Weick, 2001; Adams & Spencer, 2001). Alexis used the word 'awkward' to describe the way that she felt while she waited for her old division to close so that she could permanently move on to her new position. She suggested that interpersonal relationships between the new school division team and the old school division teams were uncomfortable and required great sensitivity from both sides. Bridges (2003) portrayed this phase, the neutral zone, as the "nowhere between two somewheres" (p. 40). This description seemed to fit well with Alexis's perspective of that period of time.

Bryan and Joyce (2007) suggested that leaders today need to build collaborative processes that are efficient and that encourage knowledge creation and knowledge sharing. Correspondingly, Alexis described the challenge of designing collaborative processes that worked within the larger organization. She explained that the processes

that they had traditionally come to associate with collaboration, in the old school division, were ineffective because they were too time consuming and because they only provided for input from a limited number of employees. Bridges (2003) clarified her frustration by explaining that the neutral zone is a “time when all of the old clarities break down and everything is in flux. Things are up in the air. Nothing is a given anymore, and anything could happen” (p. 40).

Alexis described the last phase of her transitional experience as a period of time when she started to feel more at ease within the new school division. In relationship to these experiences she was able to identify several illustrations of increased capacity within the new organization. She explained that the school division was finished with managing the change and was beginning to have time to engage in work that had an impact on learning outcomes.

Alexis’s case provided strong evidence that the purposeful repatterning described by Bridges (2003), Weick (2001), and Adams & Spencer (2003) was a strategy that she used to help the organization successfully adapt to the changes. Alexis pointed out that they often had to take the risk and try a solution that they believed would work. Then, they collected feedback and tweaked it repetitively until they had developed an effective solution. Alexis felt that it was important to make a conscious decision to become actively engaged in the process of repatterning. This decision is consistent with Weick’s (2001) suggestion that sense-making is enhanced by active engagement.

When I superimposed the details of Alexis’s story on the conceptual framework, I recognized evidence that suggested, as Schlossberg et al. (1995) and Nicholson (1984) had, that her personal context, characteristics and work role as well as her situation,

support, and strategies had a large impact on how she transitioned into the new environment. In Figure 4.1, I extracted and enlarged the circular part in the centre of the conceptual framework and transferred the details from Alexis's case on to each of the sections. This process helped me to analyze the circumstances that affected Alexis's transitions from the perspective of the conceptual framework. Although it appears as a circle, Figure 4.1 was designed as a Venn diagram to represent the broader categories of work role, individual characteristics, and context. The sections that are created by the overlapping of the three circles represent the interactive categories of situation, support and strategies. The framework characterized by the six parts of the Venn diagram helped to simplify and describe the factors that influenced Alexis's transitions. For example, Alexis's experiences illustrate strongly how the interaction between an individual's *work role* and his or her *context* reflect the details of the person's *situation*. In terms of work role, Alexis's experience was that she was hired as the Superintendent of Curriculum and became the Director of Education after the first Director left the organization. Her specific context included the fact that she lived with her husband and daughter while her work role necessitated that she move to a new community. Logically then, the interaction between her work role and her context led to her personal situation. She was required to move, her husband needed to change jobs, and her daughter had to change schools in order to accommodate her new position. These factors had a significant impact on the way that Alexis experienced her transitions.

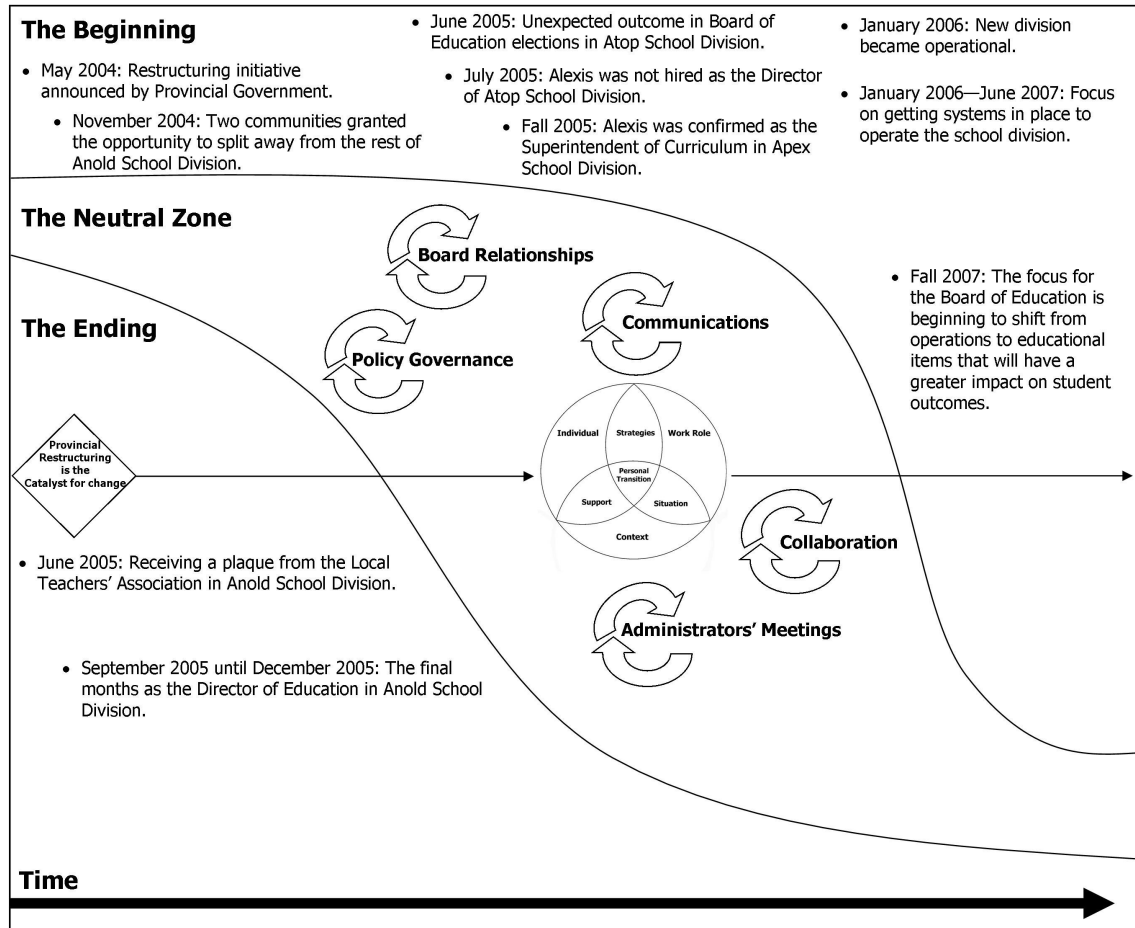


Figure 4. 2 Conceptual Framework Illustrating Alexis's Experiences

Alexis's case illustrated that she experienced transitions similar to the way that transitions were described in the literature. She described the three distinct phases of the ending, the neutral zone, and the beginning. She also explained that in response to the uncertainty of the neutral zone that she entered into a period of purposeful repatterning both in her work life and her personal life. Finally, when viewed through the conceptual framework Alexis's case provided support for the belief that personal context, character, and work roles, as well as, strategies, situations, and support have an affect on how individuals experience transitions.

Ben

Ben approached the restructuring initiative from the perspective of someone who had a vast academic and experiential base in education. He had worked in the classroom as a teacher, in schools as the principal, and in school divisions as the Director of Education. As a Director, he had experience both in leading small rural school divisions and large urban school divisions. Additionally, he had spent several years in different capacities within the Department of Education in the Saskatchewan Government. Ben depended upon his wealth of experience when he needed to make a smooth transition to his new role as Director of Education in one of the newly restructured school divisions.

Background

To understand Ben's experiences, it was important to understand the background from which Ben experienced the transitions. This section outlines his school experiences, his post-secondary training and work experience, and his wife and family.

School experiences. Ben's memories of high school illustrated that he was always drawn to leadership roles. He explained that he served on the Students' Council at his school from a very young age. In high school, he was the captain of the volleyball team and was in a leadership position in the school band. In these school activities, he learned about dedication to a team. He credited his father with teaching him to be committed to whatever it was that he signed up to do.

My Dad was big on that. If you start something, you finish it....The concept of quitting a hockey team or quitting a band or something like that, midstream, 'No, no.' You signed on, you've got it for the year. There is no option. [You can] decide next summer whether you want to be in hockey or not.

That characteristic of being dedicated to commitments followed Ben throughout his career. Although usually considered a good quality, Ben cautioned that commitment does have a down side.

I think that, there have been times in my career when I held to what I said I would do, at great personal expense and great cost to me; either physically or emotionally or mentally or whatever. It would have been a lot easier if I had been able to simply say, 'No.'

Influenced by strong family relationships and positive school experiences, when Ben left high school he chose to go on to university.

Training and experience. Ben's career path was somewhat atypical. After high school he studied meteorology. Rather than accepting a position at a weather station, Ben opted to stay at the university. He completed his Bachelor of Arts degree, a Standard A Certificate⁵ in Education, and began his career as a teacher. Within four years, he had completed his Bachelor of Education degree and, at twenty-five, was poised to become a school principal the following fall. He served as principal in three different schools. Following his first year in the principalship, he applied to take a year off to complete a Post-Graduate Diploma and then a Masters degree in Educational Administration. At the

⁵ In Saskatchewan today, new teachers who have completed a university degree in Education are granted a Professional A Certificate to show that they are qualified to teach in the province. The Standard A Certificate, which was previously granted after the completion of a two-year program, is no longer issued in Saskatchewan. However, teachers who hold a Standard A Certificate are still eligible to teach in the province.

age of thirty, he moved into the Director's role in the school division. He has been the Director of Education in five different school divisions. Those school divisions have ranged in size from a small rural school division to a large urban school division. Since his first directorship, he has completed a Doctorate in Educational Administration. He has also worked for four years in a variety of positions in the Department of Education with the Saskatchewan Provincial Government and he has even taken a couple of years off to go into business. In Ben's words, "I've never stayed in one job for more than five years. So I've moved lots. I had lots of experience with moving; relocating." His experience with change and his knowledge of the education system in the province were assets that he drew upon in making the transitions into this new role.

Spouse and family. For Ben, the impact that his role in a new school division had on his wife and family was one of the most significant factors in his transition. When he accepted his last position in Big Sky School Division, he and his wife found an acreage at the lake and they decided that it would be their retirement home. His mother, two adult sons and two sisters and their families moved to the Bridgetown area, partly, to be close to him and his wife. When restructuring meant that he needed to move from the Bridgetown area to the Bender area, they sold their home and made new plans.

To make a long story short, we ended up selling our place at the lake, which was a huge decision for us at the time. And really was probably the most emotional piece for us, because...it was a piece of paradise. I mean it was an acre. It was at the lake. We had a boathouse.

When asked about how he made the transitions into his new position, Ben explained that it was important to figure out the few things that were really important. For example, he

and his wife decided that they needed to be together. He would not move to the new location and be apart from her. He needed to make that a priority in order to facilitate a smooth transition.

What are the things that you can't afford to give up?...I would have started August 15th, and I think she moved up here by the end of October, and in between there, we were never apart...for more than maybe three or four days...It was an important learning for us.

Ben's spouse and family provided him with support and encouragement as he navigated his way through closing Big Sky School Division and opening Boldon School Division; and through the personal transitions that accompanied those changes in his life.

Transitions Begin with an Ending

Ben reflected on the provincial hiring process with mixed emotions. On the positive side, he was offered the Director's position in several different school divisions and ultimately had some choice about where he was going to end up. However, he was disappointed by the fact that he was not hired in the Green Hills School Division, the school division that included Big Sky School Division where he had been the Director prior to the amalgamation. He explained that although he was unable to see it at the time, the move to Boldon School Division had been good for him both personally and professionally. In his words, "I say, 'Thank God for unanswered prayers', because, you know, as I look in retrospect, it was great that I didn't get that job....I ended up with a better job." The challenge for Ben between the time of the hiring process in July of 2005 and the official launch of the new school division in January of 2006 was to act as the

Director of Education in two different school divisions; one that was closing its books and one that was being newly created.

The Neutral Zone Is Characterized by Uncertainty

The two separate and diverse tasks of closing one school division and opening another helped Ben to understand the discomfort and uncertainty that was experienced from both perspectives. This section describes his experiences from the time that he was hired as Director until the time that the new school division was officially opened for business.

Closing the books in Big Sky School Division. Ben continued to work in Big Sky School Division until December 2005, yet, moved on to the role of Director in Boldon School Division in August 2005. Looking back, Ben understood that it was healthy both for the organization and for him that he had the opportunity to complete the final pieces in Big Sky School Division.

I felt it was the right thing to do for the system, and I think it was the right thing to do for me. It brought closure to the [Big Sky School Division] piece, and I'd been there for five years and so it was nice to bring closure to that piece, and to try and help them as much as I could, as they got into amalgamation.

The Board of Education in Brownsville School Division agreed to let Ben travel to the Bridgetown area once a week to meet with the Board and to take care of the business in Big Sky School Division. He explained that it was an awkward time in some ways as he tried to help Big Sky School Division adapt to the new system that they would join in January 2006.

It became very awkward, you know, as the fall went on, and they had a new Director appointed down there. It became very awkward because, you know, I had to be very conscious of helping [Big Sky School Division], without interfering in the creation and operation of the new school division.

Ben appreciated the opportunity to work with the Big Sky School Division staff and Board during the last few months before the school division was closed permanently.

Mapping the beginning in Boldon School Division. At the same time, Ben spent a majority of his time working with the new Board of Education in Boldon School Division. They had hired Bill Blake to help facilitate the process of creating the policy governance model that would guide the Board in its work. Bill Blake was a former Director and therefore, had credibility both with Ben and with the members of the Boldon School Division Board of Education. Together they worked through their vision, mission, values and goals and confirmed the way that policy governance would be enacted within their school division.

While preparing to let someone else take over the leadership in Big Sky School Division was awkward, being the new Director preparing to take over the school divisions in the Bender area was also awkward. The people in the area were just getting to know him and some of the Board members had come to the table hoping to hire the Director from their former school division. Additionally, some of the people that would be his team in the new school division were Directors of Education from the area and had competed with him for the position. Although in some respects Ben realized that it was an asset to come from outside the system because he was not viewed as being closely tied to any one community or Board member, he also realized that many of the newly

appointed Board members were disappointed that they had been unable to hire their own person.

The other piece to that was I had Board members on my new Board, that are on the Board now, who may have wanted some or all, any one of the other ones, because he was their man.

Ben's school division like most others in the province decided to contract the work of a third party facilitator to help them start putting the major organizational structures in place. Ben considered the decision to hire an external facilitator to work through the process of bringing the Board together to be a key decision for success.

I'll tell you a big, helpful piece was the work that [Bill Blake] did around Policy Governance, I mean we started with, you know, 'What's the mission and the vision, values the Board's going to operate under?' I mean all of that work which we did that fall, really helped to bring the Board together as an entity.

The fall of 2005 was a challenging time for Ben as he worked between Bridgetown and Bender; closing the books in Big Sky School Division and creating a new organization in Boldon School Division.

New School Division Becomes Operational in January 2006

For Ben, the official opening of the school division necessitated many changes. Those changes instigated transitions. This section explains the personal and work transitions that he experienced as he adjusted to his role in the new school division.

Personal transitions. Eventually, Ben and his wife made the decision to sell their place at the lake near Bridgetown and moved permanently to the Bender area. "Well, it didn't take very long to realize that a retirement home four and a half hours away, that

had over an acre meant that...you're going to be running back there and doing all the work." That was a big adjustment for Ben. It meant that he was moving away from family that had moved to Bridgetown to be close to him: his mom, his sisters, and his sons. It meant that he and his wife needed to live more independently. The area around Boldon School Division was more rural than Bridgetown had been and Ben noted that the pace of life was slower and more relaxed. However, he clarified that the change was financially positive for him and his wife. When they sold their home at the lake they made enough money to buy a home in their new community.

Financially it was a very good thing for us. I might have to give that house to one of my kids when I die, as opposed to sell it, because it may not have any resale value but in terms of lifestyle, I would say, the pace is...slower and the cost of living, I think is quite a bit less. That's the sense I have, at any rate.

The move also meant that his wife was required to leave her job in Blakestown and search for another position in Bender. These personal transitions in their lives were significant for Ben and his wife.

Work transitions. During the interview, Ben talked metaphorically about the impact that his transitions had on the organization and on individuals within the organization being similar to a series of interlocking wheels or gears. I made the suggestion that I often considered the leader to be like the hub of the wheel. This idea struck Ben and he picked up a pencil and began a series of drawings. While he drew, he spoke:

I just want, just before I lose this thought, this notion of this sort of wheel kind of thing, and as you were talking,...I think you might have said the principal or

person in the middle as the hub. Well, it's interesting because I think that's very true. What you could add to this dimension, and I don't know how you show it visually is let's say I'm the center of this particular hub, and all of these people have their world that, that is within this sphere around me, if I'm not stable, if I move, now the whole circle has to move, right? So as I wobble around in here at little bit, in this personal transition. The whole sphere shifts around. Well, to adjust to me and maybe the level of comfort really changes for those folks out there, because you know, when they're in an orbit that is very consistent and very predictable that's great. But now some days, if I'm moody, if some days I'm upset because the movers haven't got my stuff here and I'm living in a hotel, that isn't someone that they have ever seen before. So now I've shifted over here, so I think that's a fascinating reality as I think the hub example is a good one. But the axle isn't stable in those first days when you go through the transitions. So, in the first part of this the wheel might be very unstable up here and as a result, it's sort of bouncing around like this, but as it moves through to here, where I get centered, and it gets down to one piece, the boundaries get a lot tighter.

He went on to say that people within an organization thrive on predictability in the leader even when they do not agree with the decisions that are being made. He used an example of a principal who called in to ask about something and was told that it was fine and not to bother calling the next time only to find out that he was in trouble when he chose not to call the next time. Finally, he explained that all of the people in the organization are the same; they are all a bit off balance as a result of the organizational change. As the

organization becomes balanced again so do all of the people and there is more predictability.

And I think that is one of the things that makes transition difficult, is there is a great deal of unpredictability, and part of that is out of the personal transition and if you think, as Director you are going through this, all your Superintendents are going through this, your clerical is going through this, your Board members are all going through this, I mean, wheels within wheels. But everybody is, and so we have this huge floating mass that isn't really tight, and it's slowly solidifies and gets tighter and tighter.

With those remarks and a few simple drawings, Ben unveiled many personal beliefs about transitions and the impact that the personal transitions of the leader have on the organization and on co-workers.

Repatterning Helps the Organization to Adapt to Needs of the New System

Ben explained the need for people to adapt to the new organization. He understood that the larger size offered greater capacity but necessitated changes in the way that the school division conducted its business. He also recognized that those changes were difficult for the people within the organization. This section explains some of the adaptive processes that Ben described.

Board relationships. Ben and the Board in Boldon School Division began their work under the guidance of Bill Blake. They chose a model of policy governance that positioned the Board at a distance from the day to day business of the school division. Ben remembered being surprised by the wide range of differences between the models of

governance that had been employed by the Boards in the individual legacy systems that joined together to become Boldon School Division.

I was surprised at the breadth of variety in Board governance that existed....It ranged from pretty close to what we use now in policy governance to another extreme where the Board member was the maintenance contact for the division. If you as a principal had a plumbing issue, you phoned him and he would come and look and then he would make a phone call and get somebody to do it, or he would do it himself.

Ben reflected that he thought that perhaps some of the Board members have had second thoughts about the policy governance decisions that were made.

Here we are later. We've got some Board members that aren't so sure anymore. They would like to go back to the more administrative Board days. They miss being involved in the hiring. They miss all of that, hands on stuff.

He made it clear that the adjustment was especially hard for members of the Board who were former school division employees. He explained that it was hard for them to adhere to a policy governance model when their previous perspective of the school division focused on textbooks and curriculum or on cleaning and maintenance. Ben also explained that his role of Director in a large school division like Boldon required that he, like the Board, was comfortable with not being involved in all of the day to day business of the school division. He articulated that it was important to put good people into the roles and then trust them to do their jobs.

You can't know, in a system like this, you have to be comfortable with ambiguity. You have to be comfortable with delegation. You have to be

comfortable not knowing....By nine o'clock, you won't know if all of your schools are operating. I mean, that's just not the reality. They are two hours this way, two hours this way, and so, you have to be comfortable with a lot more knowledge of the processes of things and less knowledge of the actual answers.

So when somebody says, 'Well, how come you picked So-and-So for this job?' You can say, 'First of all, I'm not involved in the hiring, but there is a great hiring practice and this is how it goes. It would have been advertised. You know, there would have been an interview involved. That interview would have involved at least one Superintendent and a school principal and they would have done reference checks and all the rest of it. They made the best decision they could make, based on the information available.' And you can say that with confidence, even though you have no idea who they hired and why they hired them.

For the Board and for Ben, stepping back to focus on the big picture and trusting others to manage the day to day transactions was a transition from how things had been done in many of their small rural school divisions prior to the amalgamation.

Connecting with schools is more challenging in the larger environment. Ben explained that one of the things that happened naturally with the shift to larger school divisions was that schools were forced to become more independent; principals had to take on greater responsibility. Additionally, schools in Boldon School Division have larger school based budgets than they had before.

Ours have enough money now that I've got, for example, one small school – Well first of all, they couldn't believe that we let them carry everything forward. We

do. It doesn't matter if it is debt or asset, whatever, we carry forward. – that asked, if they can do a pilot project where they provide every one of their teachers with a laptop computer....Try this for a year and see whether this is a good model, and they have the cash to do it themselves. So we said, 'Yes.' That could never have happened prior to amalgamation.

Ben went on to explain that they had all but eradicated the practice of charging additional school fees and instead had given their schools enough money in their decentralized budgets that they no longer needed to charge fees to run programs. The additional money ensures that the schools have the tools that they need to operate more independently.

However, greater independence for schools creates an additional challenge for the school division to develop effective communication systems and for the Director and other school division support staff to stay connected to schools.

So, that all changes as you get the geography, so there is a big disconnect in terms of feeling part and parcel, and tight to the organizations. So you have to get better at different things. One of the strategies that I've used, that has served me very well, is that I spend every Wednesday afternoon in schools.

Ben clarified that he divided the afternoon between two schools and that he scheduled an after school meeting with the staff at the second school on his agenda. That meant that he was able to meet with each of the staffs in the division at least once a year.

For me, that has been an important part of transitioning...wanting people to understand that I was trying to get to know their schools in the system, and wanting to be available and approachable so the staff could ask anything they

wanted. That's been a very conscious decision. Communication is a huge difference. You have to think things through and do a lot more planning.

Ben illustrated that communication with schools and with school employees was important to him by making it a priority on his schedule.

Leadership is an area of continual growth. Ben reflected upon his own personal growth as a leader throughout his career and throughout the process of building Boldon School Division. "I don't think you ever finish, if you're a student of leadership, I think you're always looking for better ways to lead." He articulated that his maturity at this point in his life and career had been an asset in handling some of the situations that had arisen in the creation of the school division. As an example, he talked about the challenge of learning to work with the four former Directors all of whom had applied for his position.

I met with them all and explained where I was coming from, that kind of thing but the reality was I dealt with it by...promoting those people who could get passed that, to Superintendencies where they have been very, very successful and helping the other ones move to employment with somebody else.

He told the story of one of the Directors who stayed with the new school division for the first year. Although Ben realized from the outset that there was only a slight chance that this individual was going to fit into the new organization, he recognized that it was better to trust in the process, to be patient, and to work through the situation. At the end of the year, both Ben and the individual employee were aware that he was not a good fit for the organization and he left on relatively good terms.

So, a better process? ‘Yes.’ A slower process? ‘Yes.’ But if I had been ten years younger, I’d have simply...said, ‘Look this guy is never going to do it. So walk away, cut our losses, move on.’ But now I worry more about...the art, rather than the science of leadership and of managing a school system.

In addition to describing the leadership challenges with which he was confronted during the organizational restructuring phase, Ben explained that he had noticed a significant change in the level of accountability required by the leaders within the larger systems.

...the accountability, the fact that everything that we do is scrutinized at a higher level, in terms of expenditure of funds, and decision-making or whatever. And I wouldn’t say that’s a bad thing, I think that’s a good thing. But that was one of the transitions.

Ben drew upon his experience and maturity to lead Boldon School Division through the challenges of amalgamation.

The New Beginning Takes Shape

In November 2007, I met with Ben in the Boldon School Division office in Bender. He was calm and confident and articulated that things were going well in his school division. He explained that the office would be closed for an hour at noon and that he would be going out for lunch. He believed that it was important to take a break and he encouraged his employees to do the same. He also expressed that he protects his weekends.

[I got to the point] where I said, ‘You know what? I think I can protect my weekends.’ And then I got to where I think I can protect quite a few nights of the

week. I work a lot smarter. If you've been in the job for thirty-some years, you should be smarter. You should know what you have to get excited about and what you don't and you should be able to delegate and say, 'Yes, these people know what they are doing. Stay out of their way.'

He further emphasized this point when he talked specifically about one of the Superintendents who was in charge of Human Resources in Boldon School Division, "I've got a former Director, who's charged with this piece that used to be a tenth of his job. Now, it's his whole job." Ben was a confident leader who used his knowledge and experience to lead the way through the restructuring process in Boldon School Division.

Explanation Building: Ben's Case

When I finished my analysis of Ben's case, I found that there were many similarities between Ben's case and Alexis's. This section describes what I learned about transitions from interacting with Ben's case and from comparing it to Alexis's case. I have included a discussion about what I learned when I superimposed the details of Ben's case on to the conceptual framework.

Ben's case provided further evidence that transitions begin with an ending, move into a neutral zone, and end with the beginning of the new reality (Bridges, 2003; Woodward & Buchholz, 1987). The ending of Ben's former life in the old school division and in his old community was significant. He had planned to retire from that position and stay in the community. As a result of being hired in a school division outside of that area, Ben was forced to reconsider his future plans.

Ben's perspective of the neutral zone was intriguing for me. Due to his personal circumstances, he was able to describe the feeling of closing his former school division

and the experience of opening the new school division. He described both roles as being somewhat uncomfortable or awkward which is consistent with Alexis's description and with the perspectives of Bridges (2003), Weick (2001), and Adams & Spencer (2003).

During his interview, Ben considered the experience of the transition and reflected on the impact that it had on his leadership during the transition period. He used the analogy of the wheel to explain how transitions affect the leader and the other individuals within the organization. If the leader is the cog in the wheel, during a transition it is like the axel is a bit loose and wobbly. As he or she starts to feel more comfortable in the organization, the axel fits tighter and the movement is more predictable. Ben's description underscores the importance of learning more about leaders' transitions.

The works of Bridges (2003), Adams & Spencer (2003), and Woodward & Buchholz (1987) identified that a clear vision for organizational change leads to smoother transitions for individual members within the organization. Ben's wealth of experience in both urban and rural school divisions helped him to have a clear vision for how the new larger school division would look. Although my research did not examine whether or not Ben's transitions had been smoother than the other participants' transitions, Ben, himself appeared calm and confident that the amalgamation process was progressing as it should.

When I superimposed the points in Ben's story on the Venn diagram that was part of the conceptual framework, I saw further support for the belief that transitions are affected by an individual's characteristics, context, work roles, situation, strategies, and support (Schlossberg et al., 1995; Nicholson, 1984). Figure 4.3 illustrates the specific factors that influenced Ben's transitions. In Ben's case it was obvious that his personal

characteristics, as a result of past experiences, were significant factors in his transitional journey. His past experiences assisted him in developing strategies for coping with the transitions. For example, he had experience working in a large urban system and therefore understood how it felt to be further removed from the day to day operations of the school division. Therefore, he fully embraced the advantages of policy governance and believed that it was an effective strategy for managing such a large organization. However, he had also worked in several small rural school divisions so he possessed a comprehensive knowledge of each of the tasks and he understood the losses that individuals experienced when they were no longer able to take such a hands-on approach to dealing with the day to day business of the school division.

Moving to a new community and leaving behind a strong support network of family and friends was a significant part of the transition for Ben and for his wife. Ben needed to develop a new support network. The Venn diagram suggested that support was a function of Ben's individual characteristics and his specific context. Considering Ben's extensive professional experience and his long time membership in LEADS, it seemed logical that he would turn to his new colleagues for support. During his interview, he described how he had come to rely on his new work colleagues and he explained that his work role would have been much more complicated had it not been for their competence in dealing with their individual portfolios.

his old school division as awkward but within his new school division he recognized the awkwardness as a signal to intensify his leadership capacity and assist other members of the organization with their own transitions. His role as leader in the new organization changed his perspective about that particular part of the transition process. This was an indication that the perspective that the leader has, as both an individual in transition and the manager of the transitions of others, influences the way that he or she experiences the transitions.

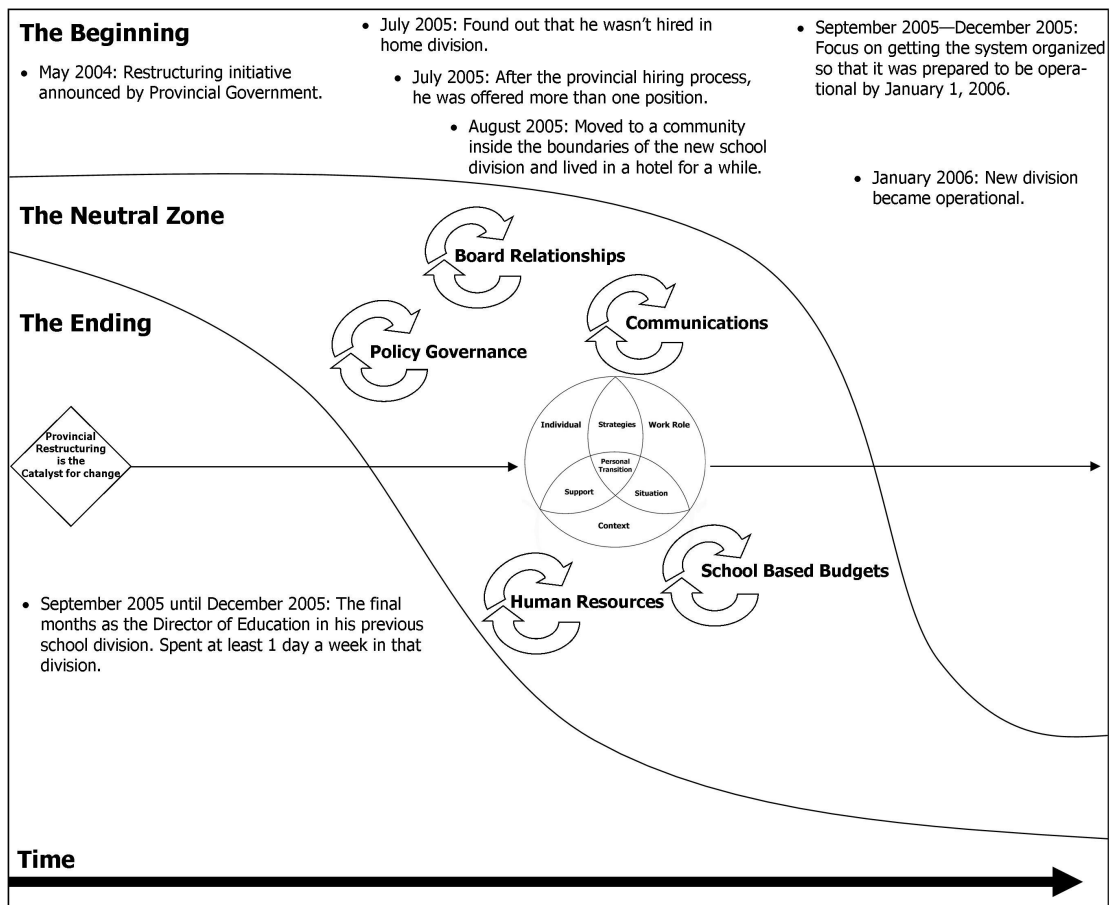


Figure 4. 4 Conceptual Framework Illustrating Ben's Experiences

Ben's case supported the concept that transitions consist of an ending, a neutral zone, and a beginning (Bridges, 2003). Also, in addition to identifying the feelings of uncertainty associated with the neutral zone, Ben's case suggested that these feelings

were based primarily on interpersonal relationships in the beginning. He stressed the necessity of negotiating and clarifying those interpersonal roles. Ben's clear vision for the changes that were taking place allowed him to be calm and confident. The remaining two cases will add to the understanding of transitions that has started to emerge from the analysis of the first two cases.

Cal

Previous to the provincial restructuring initiative Cal was the Director of Evergreen School Division in Cherryview, Saskatchewan. Cal moved to Cherryview and started work in Evergreen School Division in January 2004 just as the school division was amalgamating with its northern neighbor, Valley View School Division. Therefore, during 2004 when the provincial restructuring initiative was announced, the Education Equity Task Force was struck, and the map was drawn up, Cal was focused on the task of amalgamating those two school divisions. In January 2006, Evergreen School Division was merged with two other adjacent school divisions to become Courage Lake School Division and Cal was selected to continue his role as the Director of Education in the new organization.

Cal's character appeared to be an important factor in the way that he handled the transitions. I observed Cal to be a confident and composed individual and he explained that he was a person who was able to remain calm even in crisis situations. For example, he explained:

You'll never see me fly off the handle. I won't overreact. I'll just say, 'Hmm, that's a good one. That is a good one.'

Additionally, Cal had a humble perspective on his role as the Director and on the restructuring process in general.

I just think administrative jobs are those kinds of positions and when you calmly bring what you can contribute. You help the system as much as you can. It's always a time of change when you move to new administrative positions; new situations. This just happens to be a bigger magnitude.

These perspectives helped Cal to ease his way through the transitions that were instigated by the restructuring of Courage Lake School Division.

Background

To establish the context for his transitions, Cal described his background including his experiences with childhood, family and school, his post-secondary training and work experience, and his spouse and family. This section details Cal's background.

Childhood, family, and school experiences. Cal grew up on a farm ten kilometers outside of a large Saskatchewan community. His mother worked outside of the home and his father a farmer.

First of all, my parents are hugely influential. Dad was a farmer. Mom was a nurse all her life. Mom's got an intuition like I've never seen before. She understands people. She seems to understand how they think before they say anything. It's that kind of depth. And Dad, Dad is high on life. You know he's a farmer; never had much money but you'd never know it by his disposition. I've never seen my Dad down and I've never heard him swear, ever. Now, I'm sure he has been down. But I've never seen it.

As Cal spoke, it was easy to see that in his own life he had assumed both his father's calm reasonable approach to life and his mother's understanding of human dynamics.

Cal's primary school experiences were in a two room country school where he attended grades one to eight. In grade nine, he transferred to the collegiate in the nearby community. It served three hundred and fifty students at that time. Although Cal excelled in Math and Science, during high school he still found time to help his dad on the farm. "I worked on the farm a lot. So, that work ethic was there from square one but I didn't necessarily apply it all the time in school." Because Cal had done well in Math and Science, when he graduated from high school, he decided to study Engineering at university.

Training and experience. Following his third year of Engineering, he found a summer job in the field drawing oil plant diagrams. In that one summer, he learned both what he sought in a career and what he did not want in a career.

...eight Engineers locked up in a room...for four months, and I said, 'That's enough for me.' So, I said to my parents, 'I'm moving into Education. It's more social'...and they said, 'Well, you started something, you finish it.' So I finished my Engineering degree.

Once he had his Engineering degree, he transferred into Education and completed a Standard A Certificate and moved to a small town to teach mathematics and science. He remained in that position for five years and during which time, he completed his Bachelor's degree in Education. Finally, he accepted a job teaching mathematics and computer science at the same collegiate where he had been a high school student several years before. "After my tenth year, they offered me the vice-principalship. And I said,

‘No, not ready.’ After the fifteenth year, the vice-principalship came open again, and I applied for it....and I got that job.” Finally, he moved into the principalship in that same school. After five years in the principal’s role, the position of Director came open in the neighboring school division. So, he applied and was hired. Cal mused that when people asked him why he was going, he said, “Because I never wanted anyone to say, why aren’t you going?” Cal served that division for four years as their Director of Education.

A position came open as Director of Education in Evergreen School Division. He applied and was hired. He was a good fit with his new Board. He began his work in Evergreen School Division in January 2004 just as the division was beginning their amalgamation with Valley View School Division. Cal spent two years successfully merging those two school divisions before the next round of restructuring was officially underway. He described how he approached his transition into that position:

During that process of the first two or three months,...I went to every school and I met with every staff member individually for at least ten minutes. I had about four hundred people. So that took most of my January and February and maybe some of my March. I wanted to understand where people were coming from in the division.

When the new boundary map was officially announced in November of 2004 and school divisions around the province learned who their partners would be, Cal was so focused on bringing his school division together that he did not think about the repercussions that the announcement would have for his future and the future of the school division.

I was just so focused on my job, I just remember thinking, ‘Well, things will unfold as they should.’

Spouse and family. Both Cal and his wife work at the Courage Lake School Division Office. He is the Director and she is one of the Superintendents. Prior to the beginning of the new school division, they had worked in separate organizations. Cal described the challenges of learning to work together and explained that it took some time for other individuals in the office to feel comfortable with this dual relationship. The support of his wife and his children was important to Cal as he guided the organization through the restructuring process.

Transitions Begin with an Ending

In the spring of 2005, the partners in Courage Lake School Division started meeting to plan how they would go about merging their school divisions. To get a head start on the process, they decided to contract the services of a consultant to facilitate the merger. Therefore, as soon as the Board was elected, they were prepared to begin the recruitment process for the Director of Education. They opted not to participate in the provincial hiring process that was being organized by the Saskatchewan School Boards association and chose instead to advertise and hire their Director independently. Cal applied and was selected as the Director. To facilitate a smooth transition for Cal's former school division and its constituents, the Board of Education appointed the Assistant Director to manage the school division until its closure in December of 2005. This decision allowed Cal to move into his new position without having to worry about taking responsibility for guiding his former division through the closure process. As a result, Cal never described the ending of his former school division and he did not explain that the Assistant Director had taken over until the third interview when I asked him to describe the ending of the former environment. Logically, I understood that there

would have been an ending when he left one position and started to work full time at the next position. However, I also realized that this part of the transition was relatively unimportant to Cal.

The Neutral Zone Is Characterized by Uncertainty

The consultant, who was hired by the Board, suggested that the first thing that Cal needed to do as Director was to meet with each of the stakeholder groups and ask them about which issues they were most concerned. Cal met with the Board of Education from each of the legacy divisions, the teachers' associations, and other stakeholders. Once he had listened to each group and gathered the issues, he and the Board prioritized five issues that they needed to begin work on immediately. The five issues that they identified were: a) Culture, b) Location of the Central Office, c) Policy development and Governance, d) Deployment of Central Office Staff from the various legacy school divisions, and e) Building Buy-in by Stakeholders. Between September and December 2005, both Cal and the Board focused their attention on those five issues.

Each of the issues that they identified was critical to how the school division evolved but the development of common culture appeared to be one of the most difficult challenges that they would face. Cal was surprised by the diversity of cultures that existed within the three legacy school divisions that joined together to form the new organization.

We really didn't understand how two adjacent school divisions could have such different cultures. They're still within an hour...of each other, right?...The south part of our now amalgamated division...had no Aboriginal people. [Cherryview communities] had forty percent. Now we're one.

He explained that the southern part of the division was fairly affluent but that there were some other parts of the division included inner city neighborhoods where children experienced both poverty and hunger. Although bringing the diverse cultures together was probably the most difficult obstacle to overcome in the restructuring process, Cal believed that it was possible to establish common values and goals that would help them to work together.

The Board chose to locate the central office in the community of Cherryview but they decided to close all of the former school division offices, including the Evergreen School Division office. Therefore, by the end of 2006 all of the central office employees moved into a new building together.

The Board had decided a year previous, almost as soon as we amalgamated, that within a year's time we would have one division office. So then the division office in [a smaller community] was closed, and those half dozen or dozen people moved into [Cherryview], and that was hugely important on how things developed in the culture.

Although Cal's office had previously been located in Cherryview, he welcomed the move to a new location. "We did move buildings, you know which was helpful. It's more modest, where we are now, which, I think, kind of aligns with the kind of school division we are, anyway." The change in office space served as a tangible illustration of the authenticity of the new organization.

Cameron Smart facilitated the Board's progress through policy development and into the new policy governance environment. Through this process the Board with Cal's

input set the direction for the new school division and established the principles that would guide further development within this new system.

Cal realized that selecting the staff for the new division would be critical to the success of the initiative. The province dictated that all existing staff from the partner school divisions would be retained, if they wanted to continue to work in the new school division. Cal was realistic about the fact that there would be some people who would choose not to transition into the new organization.

There are people who decided not to accept contracts and it's not because they weren't offered it. There was retirements, there was bridging to retirement, there's people who didn't want to travel, and there was people that decided that they didn't want to be part of a new organization and start again.

Cal knew that the change was more difficult for some people than it was for others. He understood that employees from the schools that, formerly, had not been under his direction would take longer to accept him as their leader. "I guess the other thing, too, is what makes it more difficult contextually is that there is an assumed allegiance to eighteen of the schools that are already in a school division, that I was previously in." He worked hard to overcome this misconception and to help the members of the other legacy school divisions to understand that Courage Lake was a new school division that held new opportunities.

He felt a great deal of empathy for those who had their career paths interrupted by the restructuring initiative. He recognized that this phenomenon was true for both individuals who had been Directors in the past and those who had been "groomed" by

one of those Directors who no longer held the same authority to promote his or her protégés.

The most important thing...was to help people overcome their sense of loss because we now had Directors that were offered Assistant Director positions. We now had Directors...who now were offered Superintendent [positions]. That was easier for some to swallow than for others. There were quite a few dynamics that came out of that.

Cal recognized that it was hard for those people whose careers were stunted by the restructuring initiative and that it would take time for them to create a new vision and to become engaged in a new culture. He also recognized that some of them would never be able to let go of their disappointment and set new goals, especially if they stayed within the same school division.

The Board gave Cal the freedom to place people who chose to stay in positions where he could see that they would fit and he took that responsibility seriously. He believed that it was important not only to get them on the bus but also “to get them in the right seats on the bus.”

I use the work of Jim Collins a lot to kind of establish things. He would say, ‘First the who and then the what.’ You find out what people’s capabilities are, what their interests are and then you assign them to positions.

Once the staffing was complete, Cal was pleased with how things had worked out. He believed that the process had been successful. “The competency of my Central Office staff and the administrators in the schools, is like I haven’t seen before.” By January

2006, the policy was set, the Board was prepared to govern, the people were in place, and Courage Lake School Division was ready for their official opening.

New School Division Becomes Operational in January 2006

Cal noted that the transition into this new role had not been overwhelming. The change did not require Cal to relocate so he was not faced with adjusting to a completely new environment. He had applied for the position of Director in his home school division and he was successful. In selecting him for the role of Director, his Board affirmed his belief that his first two years in the area had gone well. Since the beginning of his career he had continually taken on roles that required him to have a broader perspective of the organization.

My career transition...has moved from working with a Board of Education that managed, one school, then to five schools, then to eighteen schools, and then to thirty-two schools in the course of eight years. That pretty quickly gets you out of the 'me' focus. The 'us' continually gets larger. So I think when I talk about the moral purpose and when I talk about the greater good, I know what I'm talking about. I've experienced it and I know that we can grow by that continuing dialogue.

From that perspective, the directorship of Courage Lake School Division was a natural progression for Cal. Finally, experiences with change in his personal life and in his career had prepared him to handle the transitions smoothly.

Personal transitions. The most significant personal transition for Cal was getting used to having his wife working in the same office. Looking back, Cal realized that for the most part that transition depended on the other people in the office and their eventual

acceptance that in addition to being the Director's wife, she was a competent professional and ultimately that she had been hired as a Superintendent because she was the right person for the position.

The context of working with your spouse in one of these...upper level jobs presented some issues to start, particularly for other female members of the organization. Contextually all that had to happen there was that [she] had to prove to them that she is a very competent individual and that kind of washed away, and they're really quite supportive to her now.

Additionally, Cal and his wife chose to move to a new home in the area during this time but he acknowledged that it was a different kind of transition because it happened by choice rather than as an unintended consequence.

Work transitions. Although Cal's transitions might have been somewhat less dramatic than other Directors in the province, he did experience several changes as a result of the restructuring process. He noted that the initiative began at a time when he was satisfied in his role as the Director of Evergreen School Division and he was not necessarily looking for a change.

Personally it's been very good but a challenge maybe at this stage of my career that I didn't invite. I was quite happy to be the Director of Education in [Cherryview] and area. It's a community that doesn't have everything...So, when you do something, particularly for children in schools, it's appreciated.

However, when Cal accepted the challenge he knew that it would include many changes to the role that the Director of Education plays in the school division. Cal explained that

the role of Director has become a much more political role and, as a result, he has less time to do any of the hands-on, day-to-day business of the school division.

My job is political. It's working with the Board of Education. Although they have really given me a lot of autonomy, I'm still responsible for helping them create the strategic direction; the operational plan. Then I monitor to them how that's going. So, I'm consistently bringing people into the Board table and helping them to prepare for that and looking at how we set out the processes in order to carry out the operational plan. I also have more liaison now directly with the province.

Taking on a more political role in such a large organization has meant that Cal has given up several tasks that would have been part of the Director's job in the smaller school divisions. Those tasks included hiring, organizing professional development activities, meeting with the principals to discuss school goals, meeting with local authorities, and overseeing managerial groups in the division like the technology team. Those activities have been delegated to other members of the Administrative Council. The changes were significant but Cal handled them easily and seemed to have a great deal of trust in his co-workers to be able to fulfill their obligations with great competency.

Repatterning Helps the Organization to Adapt to the Needs of the New System

Cal described three key focal points that assisted him in directing the organization through the change process. First, he established a solid relationship with the Board of Education and he felt like they were confident in his ability to lead the school division. Second, he worked collaboratively with the Board and the stakeholders to develop the vision, mission, values, and guiding principles for the school division. Then, he mentored the Board and the stakeholders through the process of using those statements to guide the

development of the organization. Third, Cal understood that change left people feeling vulnerable and that it was critical for the leaders to focus on building relationships.

Focus on Board relationships. The transition to working with the Board of Education in Courage Lake School Division went smoothly for Cal. Six of the ten new Board members were familiar to him because they had also been on the Board of Education in Evergreen School Division.

I'm an extremely good fit for the Board of Education. What I was talking about...was how my Board thinks. It really is how 'we' think. It's just part of who I am and it just makes all kinds of sense to me.

Cal explained that the Board had evolved into the policy governance model that they developed with guidance from Cameron Smart. This model provided them with the tools to take risks and to make the right decisions.

Our Board has moved way past what's termed as fiduciary, right? They do count the cattle and they do count the dollars, and they do make sure they keep their necks out of the legal news but they're very, very generative. They have ideas that are kind of more out there. They're non-protectionist of their turf as far as boundaries go. They're very, very inclusive of our Aboriginal communities. We have fourteen reserves adjacent to us. We have all kinds of partnerships. They are not always saying, what's this going to cost us?

This positive relationship with his Board has allowed Cal the opportunity to grow and to use his skills to build the capacity within the school division.

Focus on common vision. Cal realized that in this new larger organization that it was more important than ever to agree upon a common goal and to encourage all parts of the organization to align with that goal.

Alignment is necessary now. The left hand needs to know what the right hand is doing. We can't be over here, and over here, and over here. The analogy is like a huge ship, or a medium size ship maybe. Once that thing gets moving...you can correct its direction but you don't do it just like this. You can't just go, "Ok, let's move the boat and then move it back here." The focus is here. Our focus is on student learning.

Cal believed firmly in the power of the vision and mission statements and the belief system to guide the development of the school division. Although the statements were originally drafted by the Board of Education, he recognized the importance of sharing them with everyone in the organization and of seeking both feedback and approval. When the statements that Cal and the Board drafted were distributed to staff, someone noticed that the word 'care' did not appear in any one of the statements. Cal took this back to the Board and by Board motion they included 'caring' as one of the guiding principles.

Cal accepted responsibility for keeping everyone focused on these foundational building blocks. He explained how his responsibility for keeping the organization focused on its goal defined his leadership role in a meeting differently than the roles of the Superintendents.

When I go to Admin. Council Meetings, I talk about visioning and I talk about missioning and other people talk about how we work with compassionate leaves, and that kind of thing; the management part.

He also explained how important it was for the Board to focus on these statements every time they make a decision or plan a new direction for the school division.

I think we sometimes underestimate the power of visioning. We underestimate the power of the guiding principles, the belief systems, the mission statement.

What guides you in all your decision-making?

He guided the Board to use the vision, “Growth without limits; learning for all” to make decisions. The Board found that when they applied the vision it took the fear out of making decisions because they knew what they had to do. They had to follow their vision.

It’s interesting if you can help shape a vision statement that can be lived by the Board members at the table in the decision-making process, it permeates through the school division and you should see how it makes very complicated decisions easy.

As an example, he told about a request that came in from a private school located in a neighboring school division that wanted to become an associate school of Courage Lake School Division. At the beginning of the conversation, Board members were concerned about the political ramifications of creating a partnership with a school that was located within the boundaries of another school division. When it came to light that the school had already approached that school division and had been turned down, and that the school was mostly interested in professional development for their teachers, one of the Board members said, “Growth without limits; learning for all.” From that perspective the decision seemed very straight forward and they agreed to respond positively to the request.

Cal related one more example of how he, personally, applied the vision to make a decision about whether or not the division should offer to transport a student from the Catholic system into town on the bus.

Big, yellow buses. People put strobes on them. People see them. They know what roads they're on. They know where they stop. It goes into a farm yard, picks up a student that comes to the public system; our system. There is a step-child there that goes to the Catholic system. [We] can't bus a Catholic kid; it's a competition. 'Growth without limits, learning for all.' I helped that kid by telling his parents that he can get on that bus.

Cal also believed that eventually this consistent focus would help them to overcome the challenges of bringing the variety of cultures together in one organization.

First of all, what we do as a Board of Education is define our guiding belief system, right? We establish our vision. We establish our mission and our guiding beliefs and principles. I think those kind of statements are underlying our culture. So as we're doing those things, I would share them with the principals, just to make sure we're not going to create some kind of mission and vision and guiding principles statements that they can't possibly buy into. Because if they can't, you've got a Board of Education that's sailing over there, and everybody else is doing their own thing.

Cal shared the established vision with different groups of people as he moved around the school division. He believed that if he was clear and consistent in his message that people would begin to understand the beliefs of the system and would align themselves with the

division or would understand that they did not fit with this organization and would move on to work in another school division.

That defines our culture...I've got a page with all of that on, and I continually remind different audiences that here's our belief system and here's what we're working towards...So that's how I see the culture being embedded. You need written statements with your goals, you can't just rely on the verbal...We're living by this or attempting to.

Bridging cultural gaps was one of the greatest challenges that faced Courage Lake School Division during the restructuring process. Cal persisted in guiding the people to focus together on the clear messages in the vision, mission and guiding principles.

Focus on building relationships. A great deal of Cal's attention focused on the people within the organization. Cal realized the importance of building interpersonal relationships. Although the new school division was too big for him to spend ten minutes with each employee like he had done at the beginning of Evergreen School Division, he still believed that he could build a relationship with each person, if he made it one of his priorities. "I think it's quite feasible for me to know the staff of a thousand people. You know, it will take me a couple of years....I'm optimistic."

When the division decided that it would be easier to maintain clear lines of communication with the schools if they divided them into groups and assigned a central office contact person to each group, he put his own name on the list and accepted responsibility for communicating with five of the division's schools. This commitment clearly modeled his belief that making connections with the people working in the schools is a primary focus of the organization.

Cal explained that it was important for the leader to listen to the people and that the leader needed to keep the organization focused on its goals, however, he described his primary role in the organization as one of building capacity. “My primary job is to help others in our organization reach their capacity. I had that philosophy as a teacher with the students, as a principal with the teachers and students, as Director with other Superintendents.” When people came to him with a problem, Cal believed that the best way to approach it was to coach the individuals through solving it for themselves.

I learned to listen and I found out that a lot of people will solve their own complexities and really they don’t want you to interfere. They just want you to be somebody that cares. So, I use that same philosophy all the time at Board table....My people will just say, ‘Well, there’s this and this and this.’ Then I ask them questions for clarity but...they reach their own conclusions and they’re usually a lot better ones than I would come up with.

When he was faced with complaints he responded with this same patient perspective. For example, when he received a poor rating from one principal during his first 360 degree review eleven months after the opening of the new division, he clearly paid attention to the principal’s remarks but he also realized that the remarks were a symptom of an underdeveloped relationship. “If people will write that about you, but...are intimidated for whatever reason and won’t come directly to you on it. It just means that maybe I need to spend more time in building a relationship.” Whether it was the Board of Education, an employee, a community member, or a student, Cal clearly understood the value of making the people in the organization one of his priorities. He also recognized that it would take time for trusting relationships to develop. In the

meantime, he was willing to continue to work on bridging the gaps. “Fullan was right-on when he said, ‘Change takes time.’ I think that that’s almost a cliché but it’s so true.” Cal’s strong relationships with the Board, his evident utilization of the guiding beliefs, and his obvious focus on building relationships, helped Courage Lake School Division to navigate through the organizational transitions associated with restructuring.

The New Beginning Takes Shape

In a series of interviews that took place in October 2007, Cal explained that the groups within his school division were starting to come together. Although there was still some anxiety in some areas of the division, he felt that relationships were beginning to improve. He was confident that they had a highly competent team working within the school division and that the division had great potential for success.

Explanation Building: Cal’s Case

Although Cal’s case had several similarities with the first two cases, it presented the first significant divergence from the conceptual framework, as I had originally conceived it. In his interview, although he talked compellingly about his past school division and the work that he had done to bring the last amalgamation to fruition, he never mentioned the ending of the past school division. I was surprised when I analyzed the data. The events that marked the ending of that old reality were insignificant to Cal. When I talked with him about it during interview three, he explained that the Assistant Director had been assigned to manage the closure of that school division, so Cal was not really involved in the process. Unlike Alexis and Ben, Cal was selected as the Director of Education in his home area. So, although he was not responsible for the closure of his old school division, he was close enough to see how things evolved and he was engaged in

creating a new vision for the future of education in that area. This section explains what I learned about transitions from analyzing the data that I collected during my interviews with Cal and from comparing Cal's case to the previous two cases. Additionally, the section contains diagrams that show the details of Cal's story viewed through the conceptual framework for the study.

In Cal's case, I recognized that his experiences and his perspectives showed support for the importance of establishing a clear vision for the future of the organization (Woodward & Buchholz, 1987; Bridges, 2003; Adams & Spencer, 2003; Fullan, 2001). Cal described how the vision assisted the Board of Education in making good decisions. He explained how the vision helped with the challenge of culture building because it was shared between disparate groups and was a product of shared values. The vision for Cal was a key to success for the organization and for individuals.

According to Schlossberg et al. (1995), an individual's personal characteristics, situation, support, and strategies have a large impact on how he or she will transition into the new environment. The lack of significance that Cal placed on the ending of the old school division suggests that his particular situation, which included being hired in his former school division area, and having a replacement hired to oversee the closing of his former school division, played an influential role in how Cal experienced the transition. Additionally, maintaining a residence in the same community within which he had been living formerly allowed Cal to retain his established support network and meant that he was not faced with the additional transitions associated with moving.

When I placed the details of Cal's case on the Venn diagram part of the conceptual framework (Figure 4.5), I was able to see how the unique *strategies* that Cal

used to manage his transitions were the result of his personal characteristics and his work role. Cal described his personality to me and during my day in the field with him, I could see his description reflected in his actions. As an individual, Cal exemplified self control. He was calm and he appeared to adjust easily to the changing environment. He was happy and upbeat. When asked, 'How are you today?' He always replied, 'It's a good day!' One of the strategies that Cal used to navigate the transitional environment was to drive out fear for people within the organization. They needed to know that it was safe to do their jobs, to take risks, to make mistakes, and to learn from them. Another strategy that he used was to cultivate leaders from within the organization and offer them opportunities for shared leadership. He believed that by creating more leaders and giving them leadership responsibilities that capacity within the organization would grow. In his interview, Cal explained how he used these two leadership strategies to navigate through the transition periods.

When comparing Cal's case to the others, I recognized that the details included on the Venn diagram part of the conceptual framework may provide an explanation for the lack of importance that Cal placed on the ending phase of the transition. Depicting Cal's case as I viewed it through the conceptual framework, helped me to realize that there was an opportunity for learning in the unique situation presented in Cal's case and in the similar situations presented in Ben's and Alexis's cases. Both aspects provide evidence that an individual's personal situation affects the way that he or she experiences transitions (Schlossberg et al., 1995). Alexis and Ben shared the experience of not being hired in their home school division. As a result, they were forced to move and to find new

support networks. Unlike Cal's experience, the ending phase for Ben and Alexis was significant and they chose to share the details in their respective interviews.

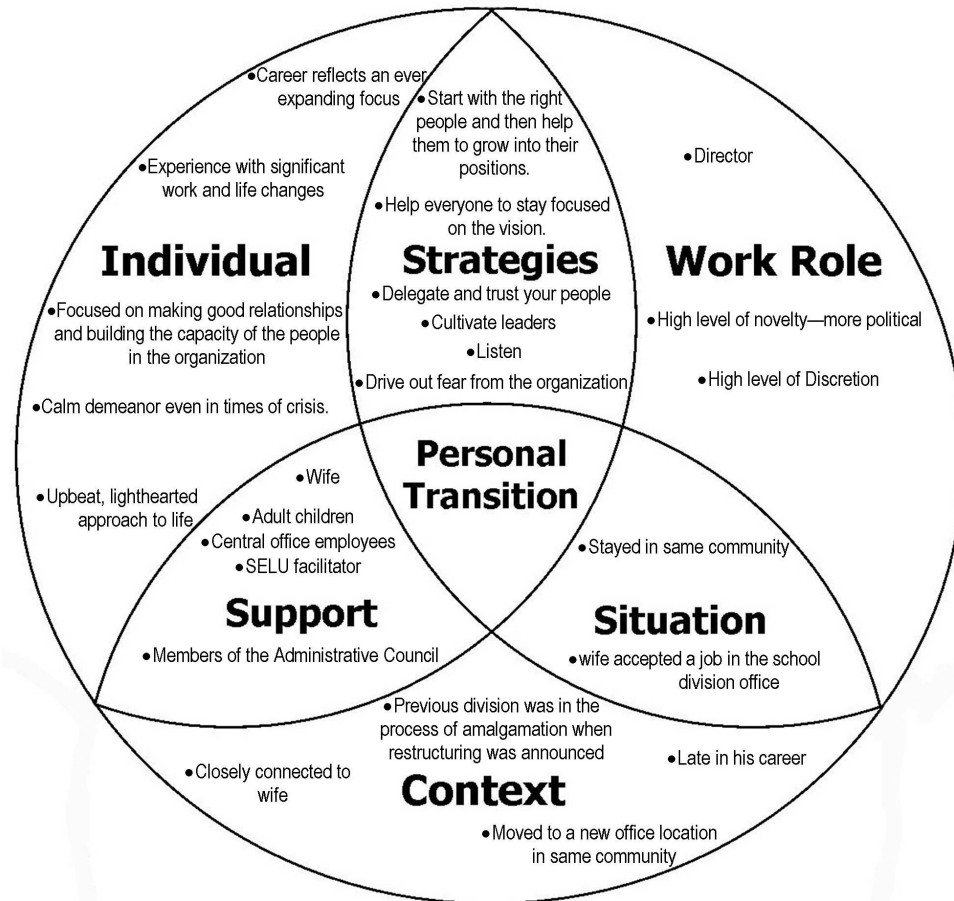


Figure 4. 5 Circle of Factors that Influenced Cal's Transitions

When I met with Cal for the third time and he saw how I had arranged the details of his case on my diagram of the three phases of transition, he indicated that in the neutral zone that it was important to show that the interpersonal issues of communications, relationship building, and cultural development had to be addressed before anything else. Like Ben, Cal understood the awkwardness that was experienced by individual's coming from legacy school divisions who needed to find a place and needed to have a vision for their future within the new organization. In his discussion, he referred to this process as

helping individuals to settle into the right places in the organization. Not only was it important to situate them within the school division but also it was important to make sure that they were placed in the right positions. This perspective is congruent with Kotter (2005) who advised leaders of change to actively build coalitions by considering closely where different people were placed within the organization. Several times within the three interviews, Cal noted the importance of finding the right people. He reiterated his belief that it is more important to find the right person for the job and teach them the skills than to find someone who has the right skills for the job but lacks the passion or the personality for doing it well.

Figure 4.6 shows the part of the conceptual framework that illustrates the three phases of transition with the details of Cal's transitions described in each of the sections. To help me understand, how Cal's case was different from the conceptual framework, I adjusted the lines that delineate the ending, neutral zone and beginning to illustrate the decreased significance of the ending. To further illustrate that the ending was insignificant to Cal, I used a dotted line to delineate the ending. The diagram shows that the ending was diminished because Cal talked passionately about his last position and explained that he would have been happy to remain in that role. Therefore, I made the assumption that even though the ending was insignificant from Cal's perspective, it would have been present. This figure also indicates Cal's perspective that the concept of getting the right people in the right places, making connections to the schools and focusing on the cultural development of the organization need to be prioritized during the transition process. Therefore the circular arrows representing these processes appear in

Figure 4.6 connected by a triangle and placed further to the left in the diagram to illustrate that Cal prioritized these tasks.

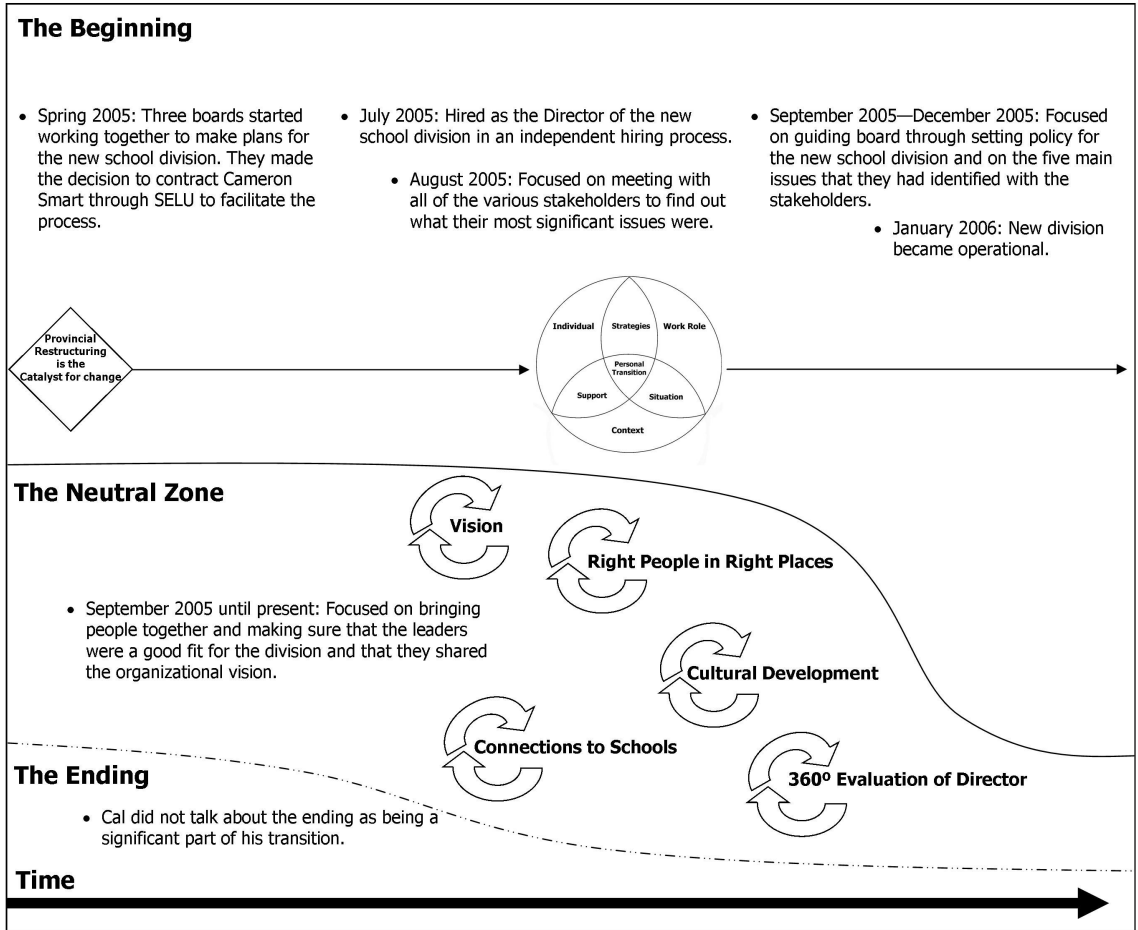


Figure 4. 6 Conceptual Framework Illustrating Cal's Experiences

Cal’s case helped me to understand the transitional experiences in a more dynamic way because it presented an element of uniqueness. As a result of my analysis of Cal’s case and by comparing Cal’s case to the first two, I have learned that the personal situations of the participants of this study significantly influenced how they experienced the transitions associated with school division restructuring. The final case will complete the explanation building process.

Doug

Approximately eight years before the provincial restructuring initiative was announced in Saskatchewan, Doug accepted a position as Director of Education and he moved with his family to Denton. During those eight years, the school divisions in the area voluntarily undertook a series of amalgamations and by the time the provincial initiative was announced, Doug was serving as a Superintendent in one of the recently amalgamated school divisions. When the boundaries of Prairie Lily School Division were confirmed and the Board was elected, Doug was selected to be the Director.

Background

To develop the context in which his transition took place, Doug shared many details from his life prior to the restructuring initiative at the centre of this study. This section includes a description of his experiences in public school, his post-secondary training and work experience and his wife and family.

School experiences. Doug grew up in Dillan, a rural Saskatchewan community. The people and the way of life in that small community had a lasting impact on Doug's development.

You're required to be independent and industrious and creative, not to say that the rural background has the monopoly on that, but I think it has gone a long way to help create the kind of individual that I am....Coming from that context, you knew that there were certain things you just had to do, and you just had to tackle, and you managed what you were given rather than wishing that you had something else.

He explained that the school in Dillan prepared him to excel academically and to be confident in his ability to accept leadership roles.

I grew up in a community where we had a small rural K-12 school. And I think that was probably a vital part in terms of my development, because I experienced as a student, the whole educational environment...The other part, is because you were from a relatively small community, or small school, there were large opportunities as a student to take on leadership initiatives and activities. And I think from a very early point on, those opportunities were presented and because they were presented, a person got to feel their way around leadership at an early age.

The values of achievement and success that were modeled for Doug by his community and his school were also held by his family. Therefore, it was a natural progression for him to accept them as his own.

Doug described his parents as the sort of people who did not pressure him to succeed but simply let him know that it was their expectation and it applied to all things; school, work, and leisure activities. It did not matter how long it took to accomplish the task. The expectation was that it would be done well.

From a family perspective, while it was never ever stated outright, that education and excelling in education was an expectation. It was just there. You knew it was. That's what you were expected to do. And again, you made sure from the sibling perspective as well, it just happened. You knew that educationally, you were going to succeed because that's what your family wanted. But at the same point-

in-time, it was never expressed outright, that you needed to be the top academic in your class, but yet we were.

Doug explained that his friends and family were the kind of people who were determined to do things well. They engaged wholly in school and community and focused on achievement. He described the informal expectation to do well and to make a contribution.

There's a group of people that I grew up with. There was always a healthy desire to succeed...It wasn't a group of individuals that was just content to watch life go by. They always wanted to be in a position where they had made a difference or had an impact. And I look back on, and it's still something I believe is true, within classrooms, there was a real strong air of healthy competition. That you saw people around you doing excellent things and you, yourself said, 'Then if that's sort of the informal expectation, then I need to do the same.'

Among his peers Doug often found himself in leadership roles. He noted that some of his most significant leadership experiences during high school were leadership roles that he earned in sports. He explained how he had been appointed the team captain when he was five years younger than some of the other players. He recalled that although he was intimidated at first, he found out that he was capable and he recognized that everyone had confidence in his ability. For the remainder of his time in high school, he was often called upon to be the team leader and he became very comfortable in that role.

I think if you would ask people that I grew up with in my high school years, 'Who was going to be a leader?' They would have said it would be me. I think the same would be in my University classes. It was never, ever something that I envisioned

that I would move through educational administration, when I started to do my planning around being an educator. But I don't think it would come as a surprise to people that knew me as a young person.

The town, the people, and the school helped Doug to define himself as a leader and helped him to build the confidence to believe in his ability to succeed. When Doug left home to go to university, he knew that he was well prepared.

I knew I was capable of competing with the best, in a sense, and it was very clear from early on in university that I'd been given a very good preparation for what was laying ahead. So when I entered my undergraduate work, it was with confidence.

After high school, Doug studied Education at university.

Training and experience. Doug's experiences in university were positive. He was well prepared and confident in his ability to accept the challenges that were presented to him. When it came time for Doug to be placed in a school for his first practice teaching experience, he asked to go to a school that was different; not an average school. As a result, he was granted a residential school placement. "That gave me an interesting perspective, a different view of administration, a different view of organization, and I think just seeing that realm of possibilities was intriguing." The next year, in his four month internship, two in-school administrators agreed to share the role of his cooperating teacher. In that experience, he saw the school from two new perspectives; teacher and administrator. "I had a sense maybe earlier on than some people of what administration looked like because of my placement in the internship. So that was important from my perspective." His internship went well and he reported that both his cooperating teacher

and his university advisor reflected back to him that he had skills and abilities that they did not find in many interns. At the end of the four month period, his university supervisor nominated him for the outstanding intern award.

When Doug graduated with his Bachelor's degree, he moved to a small community to teach. He described the staff in that school as traditional and although he did not recall seeking leadership opportunities he did find two areas in which to apply his leadership skills. With the staff, he organized some social activities to build a more cohesive atmosphere and with the students, he accepted a leadership role with high school athletics. In a short time, he recognized that staff members had started to come to him to share their ideas and experiences. Although no one said it directly, he understood that they respected his opinions and accepted him as an informal leader.

I think people always have said that the personal skills that I've had in the workplace, have created a comfort level. I think that's one of the things that people would [say], if you were to say, 'Tell the story.' They would tell the story of an individual who was open and willing to try and help out, and solve problems.

At the end of his first year of teaching, the vice-principal position in the school came open. Doug expressed interest in the position but was told that although he had potential, they felt that he was too young. Eventually, it came open again and he was ready. One of the administrators suggested that he should start graduate studies when he moved into the vice-principalship so he accepted the advice and returned to university as a part-time student. He completed his Master's degree in Educational Administration. When the principalship opened up in that same school, Doug moved into that role. He served in that

position for about five years and in the last year he worked one day a week in the central office as a consultant. Before the five years was up, he started feeling like he needed a new challenge and planned to look for a position as an in-school administrator in a different school. Instead, he found an opportunity to move into central office full time in a different school division. It was a tough decision. It meant that he had to leave the community where he had lived and worked for so many years. It meant change for him and his family. He was challenged to find a way to move forward in his career and yet, honor his family.

The biggest challenge was how will your family adjust? And I think that was always a worry for me, when I began to look at moving from one school to the next, and/or into central office. How will this work for my family? What will be the implications for them?

Eventually, he decided that he would accept the position but that he would commute to the job site during the week and return on weekends to be with his wife and family at home. Luckily, at the end of one year in that situation, the Director's position in a small school division was advertised. Doug was hired. His wife and family moved to Denton to be with him. This decision thrust both Doug and his family into transition.

So, ultimately when we were required to move and make the transition, there were some issues, around how the family, both children and spouse coped with this. There were some trying times because it was such a different environment than what we were used to but gradually over time, we all began to see the benefits associated with the change.

From a professional perspective the transition to the role of Director felt like a natural progression for Doug.

The principalship prepares you so well for being a decision-maker, that I didn't feel a significant transition. I had to get used to new processes and new ways of doing things but the leadership expectations were the same, although at a different level. So, in that sense, it wasn't challenging. You had always been looked at as the leader, and so now you're just looked at as the leader in a larger context.

Once they had adjusted to their new surroundings, both Doug and his family felt that the move had been a positive step.

Soon after taking over the role of Director, Doug suggested to his Board that they needed to consider partnering with some of the nearby school divisions to gain some fiscal efficiency. Eventually the Boards in the area did start working together.

There were a number of voluntary amalgamations, in fact, one of our divisions, we've had people teaching in the buildings that have not changed buildings but are now working for their fifth school division.

By the time that the province announced the mandatory restructuring of school divisions, Doug was serving as the Superintendent of Curriculum in a recently amalgamated school division. Although it might have been a step backwards, he recognized that it would only be for a short time and another opportunity would present itself. Doug actually saw the superintendency as an opportunity to reconnect to schools, classrooms, and teachers.

I knew that there would still be an opportunity of potential down the line and in fact, it was really good, in my process...It was very good after being involved in

central office for a period of time, as a Director, moving back into a Superintendent's role. It allowed me to experience a different perspective. When the new rural school divisions put out the call for Directors, Doug applied to several different Boards and he was hired by the division that included Denton and surrounding area. The Board had already selected Doug's current office building to house the new school division. So, when he relocated to his new assignment, it only required him to move to a different office in the same building. This time, he was able to follow his career goals with the confidence that it would have little impact on his wife and family.

Spouse and family. Doug is married and has three children. They live in the community that they moved to when he accepted his first directorship and the community that is now home to Prairie Lily School Division. He acknowledged the importance of the support that he received from his family as he worked through his transitions.

Transitions Begin with an Ending

Doug explained that the people in the area had talked about the possibilities for amalgamation for several years and over that time period had participated in a series of small amalgamations to improve efficiency. As a result, when the government indicated that they were going to restructure school divisions, most of the people in the area responded positively. It was something they expected and to some extent something that they welcomed.

It wasn't a surprise. People around here viewed it quite positively and that, I think, helped out with it. I can't really remember any sense of anxiety from any perspective, other than people looked at it and said, 'It's going to be different.' I

think people recognized that as soon as they saw the size of the divisions. It meant that we were going to have to develop a different way of doing things...People knew there was going to have to be some changing roles and expectations.

Their experiences with prior amalgamations and a common belief that there was room for improvement helped people in the Denton area to have a positive perspective about the upcoming changes. Like Cal, Doug did not mention the ending of his former school division as a significant part of his transitional experience. For him, the significant part of the journey began when he started planning for the impending changes.

Presentation to the Education Equity Task Force. Shortly after the provincially mandated school division restructuring initiative was announced, the Education Equity Task Force was charged with the task of drawing up the map. They met with school division Boards and other major education stakeholders in the province and collected feedback about how the map should be drawn in each area. When the Task Force visited Denton, the Board had its presentation prepared.

So, when the map was announced, I think people had to really get to work to make sure that the new system that was going to be developed to fit the needs of the area. When we made a proposal to the Ed Equity committee, I think we were very detailed and were very convincing that indeed the map should look different. And so when the final map came out, it matched what we had presented and it matched what most people would have envisioned...So, I think from that outset, we were much more ready to accept the change, because we knew it was going to be a positive change and that they got the first step right.

The map was constructed in a way that fit with the vision that school division leaders had for the impending changes. Doug reported that this step helped everyone to have a positive feeling about the potential for the restructuring initiative.

The Neutral Zone is Characterized by Uncertainty

The Board of Education in Prairie Lily School Division chose to participate in the provincial hiring process that was organized and managed by the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. Although Doug was successful in achieving his goal to become the Director of Education in Prairie Lily School Division, he noted that the hiring process left him feeling uncomfortable.

That time period of going through the Director selection process was probably one of the most unsettling [experiences] in our professional organization that I've seen....We moved to a situation where people were competing against one another for positions....So, it was a time where you had to be very guarded, and you had to really rely on your personal skills to make sure you got through it; to make sure you handled it appropriately. A large number of people went through the process and weren't successful. So you had to be mindful that you were dealing with people who were bitter, sometimes very disappointed, and you yourself were quite happy with the way it worked out even though you didn't agree with the process.

Despite the awkward feeling initiated by the hiring process, Doug understood that it was critical for him to find a way to reconnect with the other Directors in the area and foster a collaborative working environment. Many of the people that he had competed with for

the position were other Directors from the area and he knew that he would need to count on them to lead their people into the new school division.

The work plan. Doug started the process of designing a new school division by taking two weeks to map out a plan for the transition period. He noted that between September and December in 2005 when he was working on the plan, sharing it with the Board of Education, he felt like he was engaged in a highly creative process.

The time from elections to hiring and to actually getting things up and running, from a change perspective, it is some of the most interesting work I've done, in terms of looking at planning. You had the opportunity to create something absolutely new.

Doug's work plan was a tangible plan from which the team in the division could begin its work. Doug reported that being able to see the plan in writing provided some predictability during a time period that seemed uncertain. The work plan gave Doug and the Board a way to share their vision with the stakeholders. They provided an opportunity for feedback and they altered the plan accordingly. Both the plan and the process that they used to share it helped to build confidence within the division that their team had the ability to create a new organization that would be open for business on January 1, 2006.

Developing the work plan that was that detailed, was never something I found in my work before. It wasn't required because you knew what was expected of you on a daily basis and on a monthly basis. Because you had lived that reality, this was something new. So to actually have that presented and available to Board, it was new and because it was new, I think the Board was willing to say, 'Okay, let's see what's there. And yes, it looks after all the issues

that we're feeling need to be looked after and let's go. Let's just go about managing the task.'

It wasn't, 'Okay, I've got this big daunting task in front of me. What do I do?' I go through and here's what we have to do from a Human Resources perspective. These are the things that we need to check off, and these are the dates that we want to have them accomplished by and this is the person who is most responsible for getting it done. So, that focused us...The Board had confirmed the work plan and, of course, we changed and altered it, and based upon feedback, we received from people and added some things, as time went on, it created a predictability that we didn't have going in, which was important.

The work plan was instrumental in structuring the process that was implemented to build the new division and it served as the focal point that brought the group together.

Working with the Board. Doug noted that right from the beginning, he had a sense that things were going to go well in the division. He remembered feeling a little uneasy during the time of Board elections because people were being somewhat guarded about their intentions to run in the election. However, when the candidates were announced he felt as though the people who had volunteered to be considered were people who had the desire to create positive change and he knew that would ensure a positive outcome for the area.

I think everyone that stepped forward said, 'We're stepping forward because we want to make this work, not because we want to show that it can't work.' Again, the positive view to change made it easier to live in that environment. So, we had

people step forward at the election, saying I want to be involved because I want to make sure education continues to provide what is required.'

The Board in Prairie Lily School Division decided that before they could hire a Director they needed to establish where the central office would be located.

Prior to doing any hiring, they had identified the location of the central office.

And that was a, maybe somewhat unique, was something that they felt they needed to do prior to recruiting, so that the individuals applying for positions knew the context around where things were going to operate.

Shortly after Doug was hired, they decided to employ the services of a consultant who would help Doug and the Board to set the foundational building blocks for the division and agree upon the model of governance that they would use.

I think bringing that outside person in was important for all of us. [We] set the direction, [we] set the roles and there was clarity when we were done, and now I think just about everyone is saying that the method of governance and the method of administration that we're using is effective.

The Board elected to use a policy governance model to govern the school division. This decision had a significant impact on the role of the Board and the role of the Director within the organization as well as on the relationships between the Board and the Director and the relationships with others in the school division.

I've indicated that the expectations of the role changed and mainly because of the movement towards policy governance. The policy governance movement meant the relationship between the Board and the Director changed somewhat and the relationship between the Director and other staff changed somewhat so getting

used to what that meant was an interesting transition. It still is. We're still in the process of finding exactly how the new systems operate.

The clarification of the role of the Board and the role of the Director made the work more predictable in many respects.

The Board's expectations of me are much clearer, much more exact. I know from my annual agenda what I need to have ready for every month and I know from the Board policy handbook what decisions have to come to the Board...Anytime you present a certain item to them, it has a Board policy reference. So we know that they're not making the decision on something that is in my realm. It's very clear that it's their responsibility and they make those decisions.

The new model of governance established the Director as the person who is responsible for leading the organization. Because the Board was no longer involved in the day-to-day management of the school division, it meant that those tasks could be carried out by a Superintendent and reported to the Director rather than the Director being personally involved. As a result, Doug reported from a time management the switch to policy governance had made his job manageable. In the smaller school divisions, the Director was required to have his or her finger in every pot but within this larger context, it simply was not possible.

I think there were times in central office, prior to this that I was required to put in more time than now. But it requires a different mindset. If you were still trying to do the old role in the new system it would be very time-consuming...There's just no way you could cope if you were going to take the old way and transplant it into the new [division]. So when we moved to a policy governance approach, it

fit to a large extent. We couldn't have had the old administrative approach that we have under the current system.

For Doug, the change to policy governance has been positive. The structured roles and relationships helped him to be confident that he was meeting the expectations of the Board.

The change to policy governance and the Board's shift away from micro-managing the school division affairs required a different way for the Board to ensure that the school division was running smoothly. Doug reported that both he and the Superintendents were held more accountable for their work. To ensure accountability, the Board implemented an extensive evaluation process that provided Doug with excellent feedback.

The first [evaluation] process I went through was unlike something I'd experienced in my previous years. It was the most empowering thing;...a by-product of amalgamating and of policy governance. It was very thorough. It was designed by the individual that we used to our policy development but it's an external evaluator that comes in and does data collection. We've produced an evidence portfolio related to our job descriptions and the outcomes, and the deliverables that we have to produce. It provided me with much more focus than I had before.

Although the Board members were no longer involved in the day to day operations of the school division, they were still responsible for ensuring that the division accomplishes its goals. The evaluation plan for the educational leaders helped the Board to feel confident

that the day to day tasks were managed appropriately and it provided the educational leaders with better feedback for continuous growth.

Repatterning Helps the Organization Adapt to the Needs in the New System

Doug described several elements that were significant to the way that the changes were implemented in Prairie Lily School Division. Like Alexis, he described the process of adapting to the new reality explicitly. This section outlines some key decisions that impacted the way that the changes took place, Doug's reflections on change, his belief that it is necessary to focus on relationships, and his personal transitions that he noted during his interview.

Key decisions. Prairie Lily School Division Board and their Director of Education, Doug, made several key decisions that had a significant impact on the way that the restructuring initiative took place in their school division. The first significant decision that they made was to encourage the school division leaders from each of the legacy systems to stay and work together to create a better education system in the area. They felt that it would be important for the people from the various areas to see the familiar faces of their leaders and to know that the leaders that they had learned to trust in their old systems were working to make the new division a good place to be.

We made a very conscious decision at the beginning of our amalgamation process that we would keep as many of the people that were involved, prior to amalgamation, involved...They know the context of both the new division and the old divisions and it's not [the same] as if we had to start from scratch.

Doug and the Board made a concerted effort to get those people on board and to keep them in the school division because they felt that it would help them to build a healthy and positive environment.

We kept our people. Looking back, that was one of the most important things that we did, was to keep people around for a period of time. It gave us an advantage, I think, that other places didn't have.

One of the former Directors of Education chose to retire from the division at the end of December 2005 but the impact of the decision to place value on keeping those individuals had a significant impact on the newly developing system.

The other critical decision that the Board made early in the process was that they would not implement any big changes until the new school year began in August of 2006. This meant that the schools continued to work with the same administrative team and under the same policy guidelines. They reported to the same people.

'How are we going to handle the fact that the school division took power partway through a school year?' That was one of our first considerations. And perhaps the most significant...One of the things we said is that there will be minimal change in the school operations on January 1st, 2006. Our goal was not to disrupt what's happening in school. So ultimately, the change in the education side of the business [would] be minimal...I do think that when students returned on January the 8th or whatever it was no one noticed the change. And that's what our goal was, was not to create havoc in our schools.

Many of the things that Doug talked about regarding the decisions that he and the Board made about how to progress with the change reflected their decision to take things

slowly. In Doug's words, "Slow down and do it right." That belief guided many of their decisions. For example, they decided that it might be more comfortable for people in the field, if they did not rush to get their brand stamped on everything. Doug explained that some of the buses still have their old school division names on the sides. They will change eventually but they felt that people might have a negative reaction, if they were to rush to complete tasks like that and that they might be more positive, if they took it slowly.

There is a no real point-in-time that all change will happen. So we've allowed people to let go gradually. Rather than just say, there shall be no more discussions about the old way. We will still continue, and over a period of time, we will get to the point, where the new way is [accepted]. So, we've made a conscious decision not to rush those sorts of things. And maybe that goes somewhat against some of the theories, but I think from our perspective, in terms of people handling it, it's been appreciated. Gradually we're getting our logo and our motto, and so on, out there but it wasn't our first priority. Our first priority was making people feel comfortable and making sure that we were responsive to their views around the change.

In his opening address to teachers, Doug told them that he realized that "it would be at least two years before this new house became a home".

While the Board decided to go forward slowly and to be patient and gentle, they also decided to target the pockets of negativity that developed. They understood that change is difficult for people and that there would be some people who did not approach the change with a positive attitude.

The one thing that we've tried to manage around change is, being aware of the pockets of negativity. Where are we hearing some negative concerns? And, how can we manage our system so those pockets of negativity don't spread? So, we've been very conscious about how we assign people to committees, and to work groups...to make sure that we have a strong balance of people who are viewing it in a positive light along with our detractors. [We need] to make sure that we don't allow the detractors to derail us unless they have a very legitimate concern.

Prairie Lily School Division leaders accepted that it would take the people in the division time to adapt to the new systems and they agreed not to rush things. However, they knew that they would have to be forthright about addressing the negativity that could ruin their chances of success.

Reflections on change. Doug talked about several things that he had learned about the change process through his experiences with organizational restructuring. Personally, Doug believed that because people had often reflected to him that they were confident in his ability to deal with a variety of situations, he had learned not to fear change.

Just in terms of change, it's never been something that I've ever feared. Part of that, goes [back] to the fact that I've always had people express confidence in me. It's pretty difficult to fear something when people are saying, 'You're the right person for this and that you can handle this.'

Regarding his observations of others, he noticed that the personnel who were required to make personal transitions as well as work transitions seemed to adjust more easily to the new division. They did not have the same expectation that things would stay the same.

The other thing that we noticed...is that, from a central office perspective, people whose personal situation changed the least, were more likely to have the most difficulty adjusting to the change in work. So, if an individual was required to relocate, or if they've been required to commute, to the new office,...they had adjusted to the personal change and therefore the work change was not a big issue. It was the personal change that was more important. And I'm just going to continue to do my work. Those people who didn't experience personal change, therefore it was more of a work change, and as a result, they've had more difficulty coping with it.

In addition, Doug noted that those who had experienced amalgamations before seemed to find it easier to adapt to the new situation. Regardless of the person or the role that he or she played in the school division, Doug was aware that change posed some challenges and required an adjustment period.

Focus on relationships. Doug repeated his message that the most important thing for the division to do was address needs of the people. During the first few months of his employment in the division, Doug went out and met with each of the school staffs and took time to talk with them and to make connections. He understood that the connections that he would make with the people would help them to commit themselves to the new school division. He reflected that one of the key issues to helping people cope with transitions has to do with the organization's ability to develop trust.

The other part, you can't create a positive culture and you can't bring positive results from change until you develop trust. And building of trust has been more difficult than I think most people envisioned. That has taken more work and more

time, and it's really required you to focus on some key ethical principles that we established at the very beginning.

Trust is dependent upon communication and within the larger division it is more difficult to keep people informed. Doug shared his opinion that "the fear...is that as you become a larger division, there is less information provided." So, the division had to design a communication plan that would ensure that the information would reach all of the stakeholders. The communication plan has been an item that has gone through several phases of repatterning based on feedback from the people involved in each part of the organization. As an example, Doug described the evolution of the structure that the division is using to communicate with schools. Until August of 2006, administrators continued to meet in their original groups with the person who had been their previous Director.

I went out and met with all of the old administrative groups, and said, 'How do you see this? How would it work under a new system? What would be the best way of managing our administrative needs? Do you want a large group session all the time? Do you want vice-principals involved? Tell us what you think works best.' We brought that back and we decided [to arrange] our schools into three clusters so that each cluster would have at least one school from the former divisions. It's partly geographic, but partly because we wanted to create a new entity. We agreed that the cluster would be a primary form of meeting.

Once the school division had moved through the initial restructuring phase, Doug explained that they were considering changes to the structure that would assist Superintendents in supporting learning. Doug reflected that although they had asked for

feedback about the administrative clusters, there were very few suggestions for improvement.

They had the chance to create the structure and they had a chance to revise the structure. It was quite interesting. The revisions are minimal and I think they are minimal because they had the chance to create it from the outset.

Doug focused on building relationships, seeking feedback, and letting the people know that he valued their opinions. Doug was committed to collaboration, yet, he understood that collaboration within this context was somewhat different. He needed to improve his skills in managing collaborative processes and he needed to find ways to make them more efficient and to help groups arrive at consensus more quickly. Doug's commitment to working with the people was an important aspect of the way that Prairie Lily School Division developed.

Transitions. In adapting to the changes that were instigated by the amalgamation, Doug pin pointed both places where he felt that he had lost elements of his job that he enjoyed and places where he felt he had experienced significant professional growth.

One area that Doug reported personal growth was in public speaking. The larger division meant that it was more difficult to communicate with the school personnel and Doug found that often his best opportunities were at times when all of the staff was gathered for an event. Doug explained that he realized quickly that he needed to plan carefully before each speaking engagement so that he could be sure that he was going to get his message out. He did not have many chances to address employees in a large group so when he did it was critical that he capitalized on the opportunity. Additionally, he found that in the larger educational system the media played a role in Board meetings and

he was often called upon to give an interview or to detail plans for specific events. Similarly with the media, it was important to make sure that the message was delivered accurately.

Doug reported that he had been forced to become more decisive. In the past, he had time to let the issues ripen but in the new environment he found that there were so many more things coming his way that he was forced to assess whether it was an item that he needed to consider or whether the decision was clear. If it was clear, he needed to be bold enough to state his opinion immediately.

In a larger system there's a need to get an answer out more quickly because people's perceptions are that it's going to be bogged down. And so I've had to consciously be more decisive. [When] I look at my first evaluation, one of the things that came out quite clearly from the interviewing of people is that they appreciated the fact that when they contacted me, they could get an answer....That was not necessarily the way I was before. I allowed it to percolate a bit more, [allowed] something to emerge, but now I come out, and I see a solution, and [I ask,] 'What do you think it? Yes? No? If it not, then we'll alter it a bit, but here's what we're doing.'

Doug recognized growth in his decision making ability and reflected that it was something that people in the organization appreciated about his leadership.

Doug found that he needed to be clearer about role definitions within the organization. Prior to amalgamation the Director was expected to play an integral role in every aspect of the school division. In the new environment, it was important that he focused on his own role and stepped back and allowed others in the organization to take

responsibility for their roles. This was difficult for Doug, who prided himself in being a good problem solver, and it was difficult for the people who were accustomed to phoning the Director every time they encountered a problem.

Last year on a daily basis I would get ten to twelve phone calls about how do we deal with this, and how do I manage this? It would be on a whole variety of areas. This year, I don't get those ten to twelve phone calls, because people know, if they've got a bussing issue, they don't go to the Director any more. If they've got an issue around facilities, they don't go to the Director any more. It took a while for the operational side of things to catch up with my view of it. But now people are comfortable with that, and as long as they are getting the answers from the people that they are going to, then it works. That's my responsibility, to make sure the people that are under me, what their expectations are and [that] they are serving the people well.

Doug had confidence in his central office team and he knew that they were doing good job of solving the day to day issues that arose. This left him free to focus on his role of leading the organization.

The New Beginning Takes Shape

In an interview in October 2007, Doug reflected on the challenges that Prairie Lily School Division had experienced with the restructuring process. He confirmed his belief that they were right to work to keep the leaders from the legacy systems on board and that they were right to "go slow and do it right." Doug could see signs that the culture was beginning to emerge. He had just received the results of a survey that had been distributed throughout the community. The results showed that stakeholders were pleased

with the services that the school division was offering to the children and youth in the area.

Explanation Building: Doug's Case

The analysis of Doug's case completed the process of explanation building. It provided further evidence that the factors that influence the transitions can have a significant impact on the way that an individual experiences the transitions. Doug, like Cal, hardly addressed the ending of the old reality. And like Cal, he was selected as the Director of Education in his home area. This meant that he did not need to move and that the transitions for his wife and children were minimal. This section explains what I learned about transitions from my analysis of Doug's case and what I learned when I compared the cases of the four Directors of Education who participated in this study. I have included in this section two diagrams that illustrate how Doug's case looks when it is viewed through the conceptual framework.

The evidence from Doug's case coupled with the evidence from Cal's case suggested that being hired as the Director of Education within his home school division was a significant factor in Doug's transitional experiences. A comparison of the cases provided compelling evidence to suggest that personal situations have major impact on how individuals experience transitions (Schlossberg et al., 1995).

Doug talked passionately about the creative process of designing the new school division. He expressed that this was the first time in his career where he had the opportunity to create the school division rather than to step into someone else's shoes and accept that person's responsibilities. Doug's discussion about the freedom that he felt to create the school division relates closely to the work of Nicholson (1984) and his concept

of individuals experiencing novelty in their new work roles. According to Nicholson (1984), an upward shift in the amount of novelty that an individual finds in a new work role when associated with a high level of discretion, usually results in the individual approaching the role in an exploratory manner. Doug's commitment to the process of creating, seeking feedback, revising, and testing, illustrated that he was taking an exploratory approach to his role in the new school division.

Like the school leaders who participated in the study conducted by Goldring, Crowson, Laird, & Berk (2003), Doug realized the necessity of slowing down and focusing on the human aspect of the change. The study by Goldring et al. (2003) recognized the importance of creating a sense of belonging, relationship building, and slowing down the process to allow the people time to adjust. Doug's mantra was, "Slow down and do it right." He believed that going slow would increase the division's potential for success.

Fullan (2001), Choo (2000), and Weick (2001) all suggested that leaders need to engage people in the organization in knowledge building, knowledge sharing, and knowledge creation. There were many indications in Doug's case that he engaged his organization in all three of these activities. For example, at the beginning of his appointment as Director of Education, Doug created a work plan to guide the division through the restructuring process. Bridges (2003) suggested that leaders, who were concerned with managing the transitions of their subordinates, needed to create a detailed plan to explain how the changes would be implemented. Woodward and Buchholz (1987) concurred and explained that it was much more difficult for people to let go of the old ways of doing things when the direction was unclear. Doug invested considerable energy

into the plan and concentrated on getting it right. Then, he shared it with the Board and with other members of the organization. The key to success for Doug's work plan was that he refused to see it as a static entity. He conceptualized it as a starting point that would evolve dynamically as other individuals within the organization contributed to it and provided feedback about it. He started the process with knowledge sharing but he continued to be open to knowledge building and knowledge creation.

Another example of engaging the organization in knowledge building was the way that Doug developed the structure for the administrators meetings. Until August of 2006, eight months into the amalgamation, he did not make any changes to the administrators meetings. Instead, he allowed them to meet in groups of their old school divisions. During this time, he sought their input about effective structures for administrators' meetings in the future. In August 2006, they implemented the new plan. He collected feedback and made adjustments accordingly. Eventually, when he attempted to get more feedback, he found that the administrators did not have any more suggestions and he understood that they had found a structure that was working. He also understood that as the division evolved that it would necessitate changes and he understood that once again he would need to be open to feedback.

The format for administrators meetings in Doug's school division saw groups of administrators organized in ways that crossed the boundaries of the legacy systems and matched both elementary and secondary administrators in the same groups. This strategy was suggested by participants in the study conducted by Bligh (2006). The participants suggested that culture building would be improved by actively team building across

previous site affiliations. Doug reported that this strategy was working successfully in his school division.

Perhaps the most significant understanding that was confirmed in Doug's case was the importance of relationship building (Goldring, et al., 2004; Fullan, 2001; Kotter, 1996; Bligh, 2006). Like each of the other leaders in this study, Doug pointed out both that the beginning of the neutral zone was characterized by awkwardness and that it was imperative to focus first on building those relationships. Once the relationship issues had been addressed, the Directors felt like they were able to move on and attend to the repatterning of processes within the school division.

Doug's individual characteristics coupled with his role as leader led to several interesting strategies that helped Doug and the organization to navigate through the transitions successfully. Doug's area of the province had participated in several smaller amalgamations before the provincially mandated amalgamation was announced. In the last amalgamation, he had surrendered his role as leader and accepted a superintendency. He explained that he knew at the time that he would have an opportunity to lead again and that stepping back helped him to gain new insight into education and leadership. This experience seemed to be a significant factor in Doug's strategy to encourage each of the former leaders to stay within the new division. He understood first hand from his previous experience how important those people can be to the success of the organization and to the transitions of the individuals in each of the legacy divisions. Figure 4.7 illustrates the factors that influenced the way that Doug experienced the transitions.

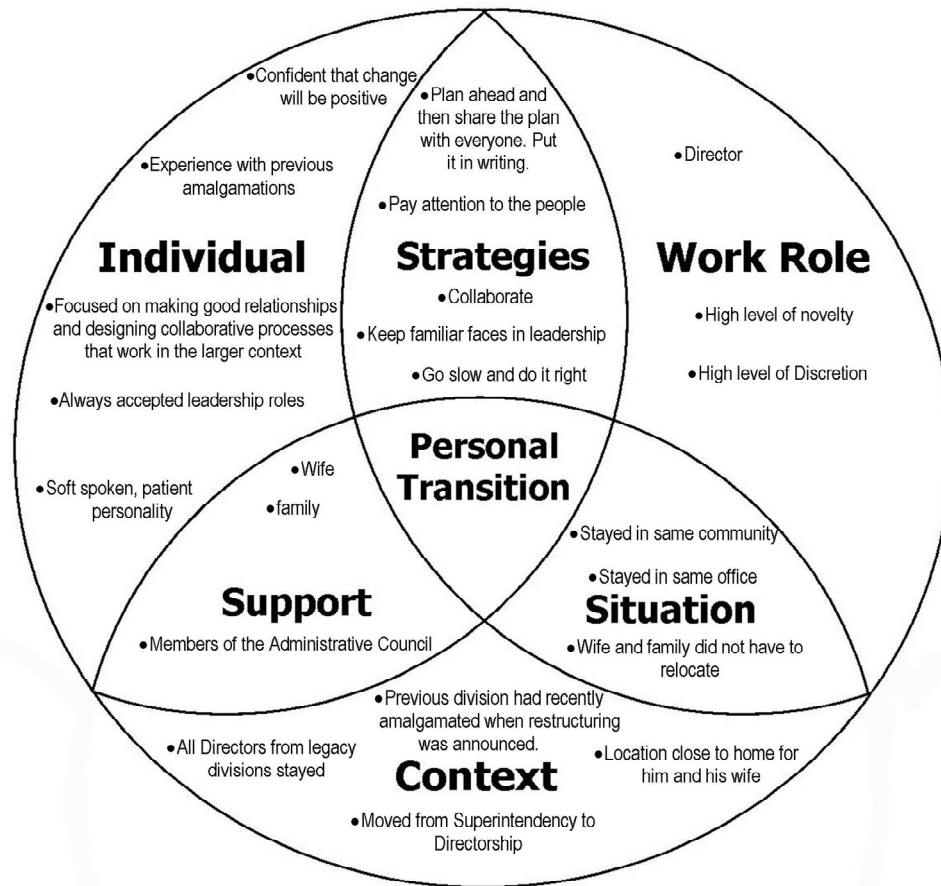


Figure 4. 7 Circle of Factors that Influenced Doug's Transitions

Figure 4.8 shows the details of Doug's case explained through three phases of transitions part of the conceptual framework. Once again, I adjusted the lines to show how Doug's case was incongruent with the conceptual framework. In Doug's case, as in Cal's case, the fact that he was selected as the Director in his home area and the fact that he was not held responsible for closing his former school division significantly altered the way that he experienced the ending of the old reality. Therefore, the line that sections off the ending phase has been lowered to illustrate the reduced significance of the ending for Doug and it has been dotted to show the possibility that the ending was not part of Doug's transitional experience.

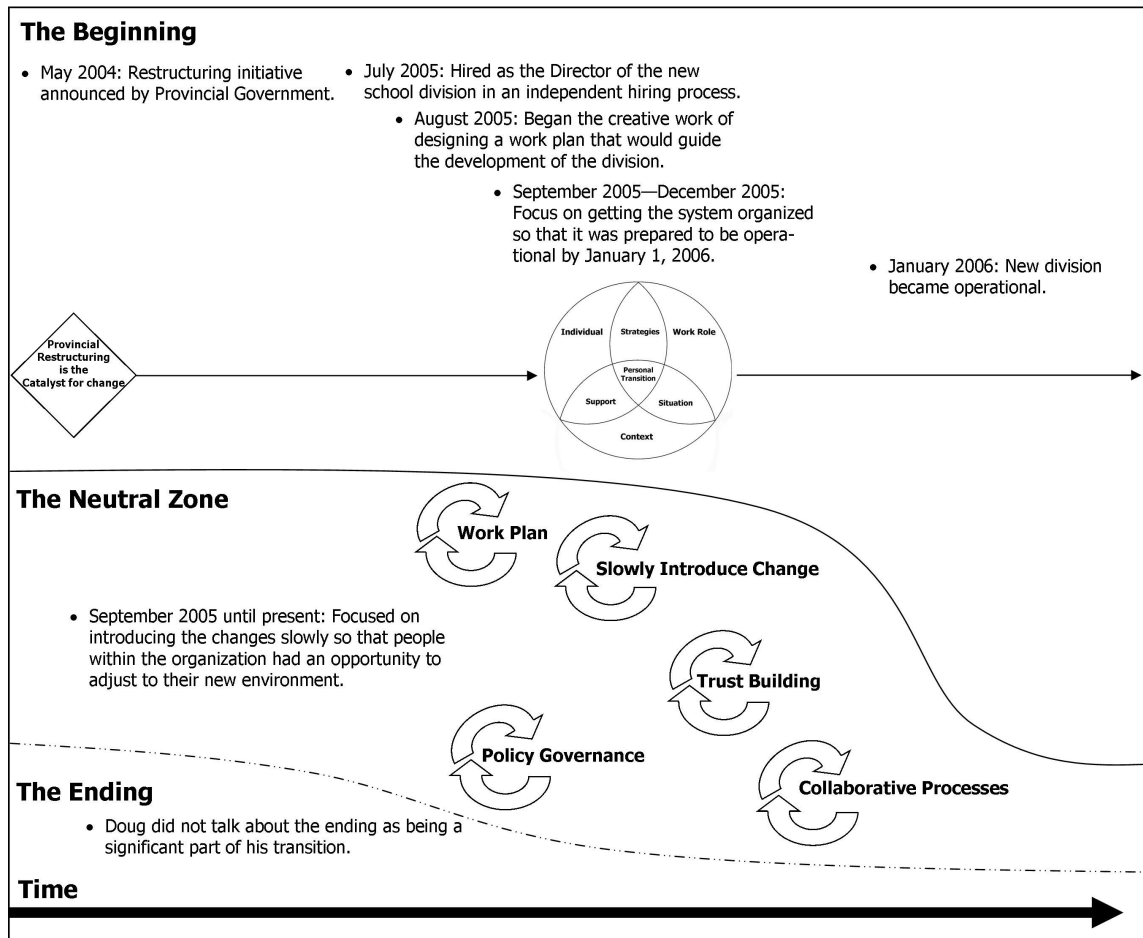


Figure 4. 8 Conceptual Framework Illustrating Doug's Experiences

Doug's case was the last one that I analyzed of the four cases presented in this study. The explanation building sections that followed each of the case narratives explained what I learned from the case analysis and what I learned from the comparing the four cases. The four cases extended my knowledge of transitions. As I sifted through the data, both the rich descriptions of the individual journeys and the common experiences became significant.

Themes and Divergences that Emerged from the Data

During the process of analysis I described the evolution of my understanding of transitions as I moved from case to case in the explanation building sections. In this

section, I considered the data as a whole and compared the similarities and differences between the cases and between the different types of data that I collected. This process drew my attention to several themes that emerged from the data and to one divergent perspective.

Emergent Themes

When I conducted the pattern matching portion of the data analysis, the following themes became evident: 1) Transitions led to feelings of uncertainty. 2) Participants experienced a need to engage in relationship building. 3) Creating and communicating a common vision was a critical element in successful transitioning. 4) Merging cultures posed a challenge. And, 5) Positive outcomes evolved from the uncertainty of the change process.

The first theme that emerged from the data was a common feeling of uncertainty, awkwardness, and loss that accompanied the transitions. This emotional response was predicted by the LEADS representative on the Restructuring Coordinating Committee (RCC) when he began his work. In his interview, he pointed out that the most critical issue from his perspective was “What would happen to LEADS members in the transition and during restructuring?”

The first uncertainty that a number of people described was prompted by the hiring process. Restructuring meant that the number of Directors in the province would be significantly reduced. Survey respondents called the hiring process both “brutal” and “uncaring” and the interview participants explained the uneasiness that was initiated by this phase of the restructuring event. Ben, who was offered more than one position, described the hiring process as a stressful time. He said, “It was a bit of a ‘Guess what?

None of you are Directors anymore!’ Now, we need twelve. So, we’ll do a competition...and at the end of the day some selections will be made.” One survey respondent admitted that he or she felt “very much like a victim when folks with a year or less experience were made Directors.” Doug said the hiring process was “like a cattle call” and suggested that it strained relationships between LEADS members who were forced to compete for the twelve directorships.

Once the hiring had taken place, the awkwardness didn’t diminish. In the new school divisions Directors faced their LEADS colleagues who had competed against them unsuccessfully for the role of Director. Alexis, who experienced the new Director moving in to her old office while she was still there, explained that “people tried to deal with [this issue] sensitively...but there’s some angst in all of that.” Ben, who described it as an “awkward” time, saw the issue both from the perspective of being the new Director in his new division where all four of the former Directors applied for the job and from the opposite perspective in his former school division where he had been turned down in the hiring process. Although each of the four Directors expressed a need to ease the uncomfortable feelings and reestablish relationships with their LEADS colleagues, they had different opinions about the outcomes of those negotiations. Doug believed that the former Directors had a critical role to play in building connections with people from their previous systems. So, he worked to keep them in the organization. Cal believed firmly that it was important to ‘fit’ with the organization. “If your belief system doesn’t line up, it doesn’t work.” So, he tried to find places for those who wanted to be there and helped those who did not to establish new directions. One survey respondent acknowledged the loss of the individuals who chose not to stay. We “lost some very good people because

they were not able to accept the new way of operating in light of their past. Some felt that they had no presence or sense of belonging in the new system because it was someone else's reality."

There was also uneasiness about the process of building a new division. Within the larger context, participants felt that they could no longer be sure of themselves. Alexis described how she got to a point where she just had "to let some things fall off her plate" and she had to be comfortable with the knowledge that not everything would get finished. One of the survey respondents echoed her words. "I have become more thick-skinned and more able to leave jobs undone or done at a lower level of accuracy." Another survey respondent explained that "ambiguity and uncertainty were the norm." In Ben's interview he shared his perspective that "you can't know, in a system like this, you have to be comfortable with ambiguity.... You have to be comfortable not knowing."

In the aftermath of the uncertainty as the school divisions started to create new ways of doing business and new ways of meeting the needs of their organizations, interview participants described how they used feedback from constituents to implement a continuous improvement cycle to refine their organizational processes. Doug used the in-school administrator meetings as an example. He asked administrators how they would like to see the format for the meetings designed. From there, he designed a process and tried it out. Then, he continuously sought feedback and tweaked the design until the administrators stopped offering feedback. Alexis described a similar method that she used to ensure better connections between the division office and the schools. "We're learning as we go. We're revising all the time" (Alexis). Ben used the example of school based

budgets and how they had needed to ensure that the budget was sufficient to cover all of the costs so that schools did not feel the need to levy additional school fees.

Throughout the data, both the interview participants and the survey respondents focused on aspects of relationship building. They described the importance of building relationships with their colleagues in the office, with Board members, and with employees in the school division. They stressed the importance of communication and the importance of listening. Doug implemented a strategy of “slow down and do it right” to allow people to feel comfortable. As a result, change for the schools in his division didn’t take place until the fall of 2006. “Our first priority was making people feel comfortable and making sure that we were responsive to their views around the change” (Doug). Cal set a goal to get to know each of the employees. “I think it’s quite feasible for me to know the staff of a thousand people.” (Cal). Alexis focused on teambuilding with the Board and set a goal to get to know each of the administrators. Each of the interview participants made it a priority to spend time in schools. Ben, Doug, and Alexis set regular times in their calendars when they could visit schools. When Cal assigned central office staff to schools, he put his name on the list and volunteered to take responsibility for being the primary contact for several schools. When asked about points that stood out in the restructuring process one survey respondent wrote about the development of relationships, “There is no one particular point that stands out, just a gradual coming to realize that I was better understanding the people new to me and I was becoming more tolerant and I hoped that they were becoming more tolerant of me, as well.” Relationship building was a critical part of the transition process.

The data also indicated the importance of a clear vision for change. Each of the interview participants highlighted the importance of vision. Cal explained how he had helped the Board to make some challenging decisions with the school division's vision statement, 'Growth without limits: Learning for all.' He described the decision to allow a student from the Catholic school system to ride to school on the public school bus. Once the Board applied the vision, the decision was clear. Alexis explained that although the vision had been set before she became the Director, she understood the importance of bringing the vision to life. Both Ben and Doug shared their beliefs that the process of setting the vision had been a significant step towards creating the new school division. When asked what made the transitions easier, one survey respondent replied, "A strong dynamic Director of Education with a clear vision and excellent communication skills."

The challenge of merging diverse cultures was another common theme. Alexis used the issue of teacher supervision as an example. She explained that the practices within the former division were so different that implementing a new system required a significant amount of training to create a base of common knowledge. The demographics in Cal's division varied significantly. "We really didn't understand how two adjacent school divisions could have such different cultures. They're still within an hour of each other, right? There are some similarities but, to work through that, I didn't realize how complex that was." Ben described the differences in Board cultures between the legacy Boards: "I was surprised at the breadth of variety in Board governance that existed....It ranged from pretty close to what we use now in policy governance to another extreme where the Board member was the maintenance contact for the division." Doug explained that building a culture would take time. "Now that we're starting our second full school

year there is predictability [but]...it will be at least four years before we begin to identify with this division as my division or our division.”

The final theme that surfaced in the data was that change presented an opportunity for positive outcomes. One of the survey respondents wrote, “Being able to be part of creating a new division is positive. I think the educational capacity of the division is larger and over time the student outcomes will improve.” Ben described the increase in capacity that occurred when school divisions were able to assign an expert to each area. It meant that there was “a former Director who was charged with this piece that used to be one tenth of his job. Now, it’s his whole job.” Alexis concurred, “We are the same people but we didn’t really have the capacity to do that deeper work and now we do....We’re talking about changing the norm, not the exception.”

Divergent Perspectives

The most noteworthy divergence in the data became evident during the time series analysis portion of the data analysis. The conceptual framework indicated that transitions take place in three distinct phases: the ending, the neutral zone, and the beginning. A chronological examination of Alexis’s case or Ben’s case illustrates that their experiences roughly followed that pattern. As Bridges (2003) pointed out, transitions are non-linear, so the data showed that the individuals were involved in all three phases simultaneously and that they focused more on the ending of their former positions early in the transition process, and more on the beginning of their new positions by the end of the process. For example, in Alexis’s interview when she explained her experiences at the beginning of the restructuring initiative she focused on the Board elections, the hiring process, and on the time that she spent maintaining the old system before the new school division took

over. Even though, she had accepted a position in the new school division and was making plans to move. Further into the process, when many of the important parts in the ending phase were over, she pointed out that she “still grieved” the loss of contact that she had with schools, indicating that she was still working through the ending of her former role. However, when I put the events of Cal’s case and Doug’s case in chronological order, I recognized that neither of them described the ending of his former position in great detail. Both of them shared information about their former positions and information about the hiring process which signified to me that they recognized the ending but did not see it as a critical part of the overall process. Unlike Ben, Alexis, and several survey respondents, neither Cal nor Doug described other particular events that marked the ending or describe any associated losses. The data collected in this study were not sufficient to explain why this divergence occurred. However the common aspects that linked the cases of both Cal and Doug were that they were hired in their home school divisions and, coincidentally, were not responsible for the closing of their former divisions. In Doug’s interview he made reference to his easy transition:

I think that even though I changed roles, changed schools, and changed school divisions the context was still relatively the same. You’re dealing with a rural Saskatchewan context. And you’re familiar with the way things are done in that context. You’re familiar with how people generally conduct themselves. It would have been much different had I moved to a situation where I wasn’t socially aware of circumstances or situations. Here, I knew socially what was happening. I can remember going to the first function with my new Board of

Education and it was like a family picnic....It wasn't as if you were put in a completely different situation than you have been used to coping with.

Ben and Alexis, on the other hand, were not hired in their former school divisions and they had to bring their former divisions to a close before they could immerse themselves in the new division. Perhaps these circumstances led to the divergence in the experiences of the two Directors who did not attach a great deal of significance to the ending of their previous positions.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 presented the data that were collected in the study. The first section, presented the data that were collected about the restructuring initiative through an interview with the LEADS representative on the Restructuring Coordinating Committee and through document analysis of the minutes of the RCC and the restructuring bulletins. Section two, described the themes that emerged from the survey data. The next section included narratives that described the transitional experiences of the four Directors of Education. Following the presentation of each case a discussion of connections to the literature and implications for the conceptual framework added to the process of explanation building. The final section in Chapter 4 explored the themes and divergences that were evident in the data as a whole. The Directors of Education who participated in this study recognized that the neutral zone was characterized by uncertainty and explained that it was important to alleviate the uncertainty first by addressing relationship building and then through the purposeful repatterning of the processes within the organization. Additionally, a comparison of the four cases provided support for the understanding that an individual's personal situation has a significant impact on the way

that the person experiences transitions. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings of this study, explains how it fits into the current discourse, and describes the implications that it has for research, theory, and practice.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Reflection

The purpose of this study was to build an understanding of the transitional experiences of four Directors of Education who led their rural Saskatchewan school divisions through an organizational restructuring process that was mandated by the provincial government in November 2004. In this study the participants reflected on their experiences over a three year period from the time of the announcement until the new organization had been operational for a year and a half. The four Directors of Education who participated in this study provided perspectives of leaders' transitional experiences during organizational restructuring.

The data collected in this study were organized and analyzed to answer the following research questions:

1. How did the Directors of Education, as the leaders of their school divisions, experience the transitions associated with organizational restructuring?
2. What contextual factors influenced the transitional experiences of Directors of Education in rural school divisions during the restructuring initiative?
3. What strategies did the four Directors of Education use to cope with their transitional experiences during organizational restructuring?

A review of the literature provided a description of transitions that helped to frame the study. Both Bridges (2003) and Woodward & Bucholz (1987) suggested that

transitions take place in three distinct phases – the ending, the neutral zone, and the beginning. Several researchers agreed that transitions spur feelings of uncertainty which lead to the repatterning of behaviours as the individuals adapt to their new reality (Bridges, 2003; Weick, 2001; Adams & Spencer, 2003). Others asserted that a clear vision for organizational change leads to smoother transitions for all members of the organization (Woodward & Buchholz, 1987; Bridges, 2003; Adams & Spencer, 2003). Schlossberg, et al. (1995) stated that personal characteristics, situation, support, and strategies shape transitional experiences. Nicholson (1984) focused specifically on work role transitions. He suggested that a shift in discretion and novelty when moving into a new work role affects the way that an individual adapts to the new environment. These perspectives from the literature were represented heuristically in the conceptual framework for this study (see Chapter 2).

This study employed a multiple case study design as described by Yin (1989). Data were gathered through an initial questionnaire, an interview with one member of the Restructuring Coordinating Committee, and a series of interviews with four educational leaders who volunteered to participate in the study. The data were analyzed through pattern matching, time series analysis, and explanation building. The data analysis resulted in four narratives (see Chapter 4) written in chronological order to accentuate the transition process as it took place over the course of the three year period.

Chapter 5 provides an opportunity for discussion and reflection about the topic of leaders' transitional experiences. It begins with a discussion of the findings as they relate to the three research questions that guided the study. From there, I outline the significant understandings that I developed through my analysis of the data. Then, based on the

learnings that were developed through the study the following section describes my reflections on the conceptual framework. The next three sections address the implications that the findings had for theory, practice, and research. Chapter 5 ends with my final reflections about the study.

Findings

This study evolved from my own curiosity about how leaders within the field of education experienced the transitions associated with organizational change. Once the research questions were established, the rest of the process of study design, data collection, and data analysis focused on answering the questions that were posed. This section provides a discussion about each of the research questions and the understandings that I developed through my analysis of the data.

How did the Directors of Education, as the leaders of their school divisions, experience the transitions associated with organizational restructuring?

The four Directors of Education who participated in this study were each unique individuals who came into the restructuring situation with different backgrounds in education, leadership, and in their personal lives. The way that they experienced the transitions during the school division restructuring initiative showed elements that were similar and elements that were different from each other. The comparison of those similarities and differences helped me to understand how the Directors experienced the transitions that were associated with school division restructuring.

The data showed that the Directors experienced uncertainty at several points in the transition process: 1) during the hiring process, 2) at the beginning of their assignment when they had to negotiate their relationships with former Directors from

their new school divisions, and 3) throughout their transitions as they developed an understanding of the new and unfamiliar environment in their larger and more complex school divisions.

First, the hiring process, which was one of the first formal indicators that the number of Directors in the province would be reduced significantly, prompted feelings of insecurity that surfaced through the data analysis. Both survey respondents and interview participants described their emotional responses to this phase of their transitions. Doug attributed the uncertain feelings partly to the dilemma posed by having to compete with his colleagues for the few remaining directorships. "You couldn't celebrate because you didn't want to appear that way in front of your colleagues who had competed with you." He also suggested that the feelings of uncertainty were exacerbated by the manner in which the interviews were conducted. "The manner in which it was done...felt very impersonal. You couldn't even feel completely good about getting the job because you knew the process wasn't as well thought out as it could have been." In his opinion, both the process and the situation led to the feelings of discomfort that were reported by the Directors through the interviews and the survey responses. Although the other research participants did not talk as extensively as Doug had about the topic, they reported similar discomfort with the hiring process.

Second, the Directors were faced with the difficulties of negotiating their relationships with former LEADS colleagues with whom they had competed for the directorships. Ben described the environment as "awkward" and explained that the "major issue [for him] was dealing with four Directors, all of whom wanted to have [his] job." Alexis said that everyone had to be sensitive to the situation. She described herself

as fortunate because although she was not initially successful in the hiring process she was offered the choice to work in either of the school divisions that included schools from her former division. She explained that although the others knew “they were going to be there, but they didn’t know what their role would be, they didn’t know what the world would look like.” Doug described both his own tentativeness in dealing with the bruised feelings of his colleagues and his empathy for their unfortunate experiences:

It was a time where you had to be very guarded and you had to really rely on your personal skills to make sure you got through it. [You had to] make sure you handled it appropriately because a large number of people went through the hiring process and weren’t successful. So,...you were dealing with people who were bitter and sometimes very disappointed.

When I met with Cal at the third interview to discuss his case, he stressed to me that it had been important for him to work through those relationships before anything else. After that interview, I went back over the data from the other three cases and I realized that each of the Directors had addressed those interpersonal issues early in the transition process.

Third, in addition to the awkwardness that the Directors described with regard to their relationships with their LEADS colleagues following the hiring process, they shared a general feeling of uncertainty associated with their transitional experiences. The school divisions were larger than before, the issues were more complex, and everything was new. Alexis said, “It’s a multi-dimensional concept. It’s about the size of the system in terms of student population, but geographical size as well.” Ben explained the uncertainty created when many people were experiencing the transitions simultaneously. “Everybody

is [going through this] and so we have this huge floating mass that isn't really tight, and it slowly solidifies and gets tighter and tighter." One survey respondent said that the transition was like moving "from a comfortable working environment to one much more uncertain." Another responded, "The new job is so all encompassing that there is not time to do anything but move forward" and a third shared that it felt like he or she had experienced a "loss of predictable outcomes." Alexis explained she thought that change was "always uncomfortable." Although she had experienced several amalgamations before, "this new world of restructuring was so significantly different....that it's been a brand new learning about how you do the work around restructuring and we still haven't got it right." As they moved forward through the restructuring process school division personnel established new patterns and processes that worked in the new organization and re-established a sense of certainty. Alexis described it as a time when they started to "operationalize" some of their work. Doug explained that he was able to measure the fact that people in his school division were starting to feel more comfortable with the processes by the number of phone calls that he received. "Last year on a daily basis I would get ten to twelve phone calls about how do we deal with this or how do I manage this?...This year, I don't get those ten to twelve phone calls."

In addition to feelings of uncertainty, the interviews and the survey responses were permeated with descriptions of relationship building. These descriptions varied broadly in scope but each helped me to build an understanding of the priority that the leaders placed on relationship building during the transition process. Doug talked about the complexity of building trust and the time that it seemed to take before people started to identify with the new organization. "You can't create a positive culture and you can't

bring positive results from change until you develop trust. And building trust has been more difficult than I think most people envisioned.” Doug considered it a significant accomplishment when he observed administrators choosing to partner with others who had not been part of their former school division. “Large numbers of people paired up with individuals outside of their former division. And when they were asked to group together, they grouped outside of their former division. So we are making progress.” Cal set a goal to get to know all of the employees because he felt that it was important. Alexis explained that professional development was like “teambuilding but through a vehicle that’s going to get us something else.” A survey respondent focused on the importance of transparency in bringing people together. “People felt positive when the process to participate was transparent and there were no hidden agendas to continue on with the old perspectives or realities.” Ben explained that relationship building was critical because “there is a big disconnect in terms of feeling part and parcel, and tight to the organization.” During the interviews the four Directors described their relationships with their LEADS colleagues, relationships with the Board, relationships with the schools, communication, trust, collaboration, and many other topics that focused on the need to build strong relationships.

The four Directors of Education who participated in this study came into the study with a variety of backgrounds and personal characteristics. The cases illustrate that the Directors experienced the transitions associated with restructuring in unique ways. Additionally, the four participants described the common experiences of feeling uncertain during the hiring process, while they negotiated their interpersonal relationships with colleagues whose roles had changed, and as they designed new processes to do the

business of their school divisions. Finally, the Directors described a common priority that they had placed on relationship building during the transition process.

What contextual factors influenced the transitional experiences of Directors of Education in rural school divisions during the restructuring initiative?

The transitions that were experienced by the Directors of Education during the restructuring event were affected by a variety of contextual factors. The unique characteristics of each Director's life provided a variety of contexts within which their transitions took place. On the other hand, the provincial restructuring process, which clearly outlined the expectations of school divisions, necessitated several common contextual aspects within the four cases. During my analysis it became apparent that contextual factors had a significant effect on how the Directors experienced their transitions, when I realized that the two Directors, who moved to new school divisions and who were responsible for closing their former school divisions, experienced their transitions differently than the other two Directors.

The transitional experiences of the four Directors involved in this study were unique because their backgrounds, prior experiences, personal situations, support networks, and personalities were very different from each other. For example, Alexis rented an apartment during the early stages of the transition process and commuted to her former community on weekends to be with her husband and family. Ben and his wife moved together to the new community leaving behind friends and family. In Cal's division the Board decided to relocate to a new office space, and on a more personal level, Cal adapted to working in the same office as his wife. Some differences were a result of the Directors' personal characteristics and the way they responded to the

experience or the way they perceived the experience. Doug, for example, spent two weeks drafting a work plan independently at the beginning of the process while Cal went out to the stakeholders and asked them to identify the major issues. Other unique aspects were the result of differences in the Directors' priorities, visions, and strategies for success. Survey respondents pointed out that their transitions were affected by their years of experience in educational administration, by experiences with other school division amalgamations, and by a personal ability to adapt to change.

In my journal reflections, I noted differences within the contexts of the divisions, and the division offices. For example, I noted in Alexis's office that "I was shocked by the layout and the population of the school division office. It felt so crowded. There were people everywhere!" In Ben's school division the office closed during lunch. Ben explained that it was part of their culture. They had made work-life balance one of their priorities. At Doug's office someone met me in the parking lot, escorted me into the building, helped me to get a coffee, and chatted with me until he was available. When I spent the day with Cal I wrote, "It was my first time in this part of the province. I have never travelled north from the community in which the division office is located and I was shocked by the distance that we travelled to get to the schools on the boundaries of the division." I also noted that Cal was the only one of the Directors that toured me through the office and introduced me to all of the central office team while he explained the structure of the new division. Although these points are not comparable pieces of data, each one of them indicates unique contextual factors that played a part in the transitions of the individual Directors.

The fact that all of the Directors were involved in a provincially mandated restructuring initiative that took place over a particular timeframe determined that their transitions were also affected by contextual factors that were similar. The provincial government, with advice from Restructuring Coordinating Committee, outlined a comprehensive restructuring process for school divisions to follow so a great deal of the data revolved around similar points in the journey. For example, the hiring process led to a significant reduction in the number of Directors which caused the Directors to experience social awkwardness with their colleagues as the work in the new divisions was getting underway.

A comparison of the similarities and differences between the four cases revealed a difference in contextual factors that corresponded to a difference in the transitional experiences that were reported in the data. Both Ben and Alexis were required to move to a new area of the province to accept positions within their newly restructured school divisions and were tasked with the responsibility of leading the closure of their old school divisions. Changing residences necessitated additional transitions for Ben, Alexis, and their families. Additionally, their leadership roles during the closure of their former school divisions provided additional time for them to consider the ending of their former positions. Cal and Doug, on the other hand, were hired as the Directors of Education in the school divisions in which they were working prior to the amalgamation process and neither of them was made responsible for the closing of their former school division. Although logically I understood that Cal and Doug would have different experiences, I was surprised to learn that both of them chose not to describe the ending of their former positions. Although I understood, based on previous research, that transitions take place

in three phases: the ending, the neutral zone, and the beginning (Bridges, 2003; Woodward & Buchholz, 1987), and although that was the case for both Alexis and Ben, in the two cases where the individuals were not required to change residences, the participants did not describe the ending of the old environment as a significant part of the way that they experienced the transitions. Doug reflected on the opportunity that he had to fully engage in creating the new school division while someone else was responsible for closing the former system:

The fact that we weren't required to manage a system at the time we were doing the creation was very important because you could be creative and you could plan and you could organize and you could test thoughts and ideas with people without having to worry about the day to day affairs of your school division. And I think the result of allowing that to happen meant that on January 1st, 2006, we were much further ahead from those places that had a shorter period of time to do the transition.

The contextual factors associated with the transitions of the Directors of Education had a notable effect on the way in which the participants experienced the transitions that were initiated by school division restructuring.

What strategies did the four Directors of Education use to cope with their transitional experiences during organizational restructuring?

The strategies that were utilized by the Directors of Education to cope with the transitions associated with organizational restructuring varied significantly from one individual to the next. Figure 5.1 details many of the divergent strategies employed by the four individuals.

<p style="text-align: center;">Alexis’s Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work hard • Support each other • Set priorities—If you can’t do everything, make sure that you choose the most important items on the ‘to-do’ list. • Set achievable goals 	<p style="text-align: center;">Ben’s Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger environment necessitates a focus on leadership—Don’t micro manage. • Be comfortable with ambiguity • Maintain a work/life balance • If the people don’t fit with the organization, support them to move on. If they fit, find the right place for them. • Provide people with the resources that they need to do a good job.
<p style="text-align: center;">Cal’s Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share leadership • Build leaders • Participate in the work • Encourage people to take risks • Listen—often people will solve problems on their own • If the people don’t fit with the organization, support them to move on. If they fit, find the right place for them. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Doug’s Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a plan. • Let transitions happen gradually—Don’t force change. • Build trust • Monitor pockets of negativity • Seek input • Address pockets of negativity • Maintain a work/life balance • Larger environment necessitates a focus on leadership—Don’t micro manage. • Be confident—Try to respond quickly. It builds trust. • Work to keep the people in the organization—understand their uncertainty
<p>Strategies used by all four Directors of Education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build relationships • Maintain a common vision • Don’t try to hold on to the old ways that worked in the old environment—seek new solutions • Understand that change and transitions are hard for everyone • Build strong processes through the implementation of a continuous improvement cycle—Try something, seek feedback, make revisions, test the revisions, seek more feedback, etc. • Hire an outside facilitator 	

Figure 5. 1 Strategies used by the Directors of Education

In addition to the variety of strategies used by individuals several strategies were employed by all four of the Directors of Education in the study. Each of the common strategies is discussed in more detail below:

1. Build Relationships - The priority that was placed on relationship building throughout the transition process was evident in the vast number of references to aspects of relationship building. Doug explained the challenge of building relationships in the new environment. “We set a goal that we were still going to be very people oriented

but that's the most difficult part in a situation where you don't know all your employees anymore." Cal's goal was to get to know all of the employees in his school division. Alexis decided to focus on building relationships with all of the in-school administrators in her school division. The survey respondents confirmed that relationship building was an important aspect of the transitional experience. One survey respondent wrote:

I have been exposed to a greater variety of people, circumstances and communities. It has made me more flexible and aware of different perspectives. It has also reaffirmed the importance of honest and open interactions with people. This has been particularly important as we are trying to build trust.

2. Maintain a common vision - The four Directors indicated the importance that they placed on establishing and communicating a clear vision for change. When the Board of Education in Cal's school division was faced with a decision about whether or not to offer services to an independent school in their area, Cal asked them to apply their vision, 'Growth without limits: Learning for all.' Alexis explained that although the vision had been set before she became the Director, she understood the importance of helping others in the organization to maintain sight of the vision. "We need to touch base with that all the time. Every time I speak I refer to our vision statement." Both Ben and Doug shared their beliefs that the process of setting the vision had been a significant step towards creating the new school division. One survey respondent acknowledged, "I believe that the transitions became easier because of the leadership of our Director.... We have focused on working towards a vision as a team."

3. Don't try to hold on to the old ways that worked in the old environment—seek new solutions - Perhaps the survey respondent who stated that “old systems do not work in the new organization” said it most clearly. However, the four interview participants agreed. Alexis pointed out that the work was so new that they were “revising all the time.” Ben pointed out that it was impossible in the larger context for leaders to be involved in all parts of the organization. Therefore, he explained that “you have to be comfortable with a lot more knowledge of the processes of things and less knowledge of the actual answers.” Doug expounded on the opportunities that he saw in creating the new division:

You had the opportunity to create something absolutely new....You were allowed to create from the very beginning. You were allowed to consult and collaborate and come up with what you felt was the best possible answer. And generally, it was really intriguing, really interesting work.

4. Understand that change and transitions are hard for everyone - Many survey respondents clearly communicated the challenges that they experienced with the changes. One person described his or her surprise about “how much difficulty some people had with amalgamation when they retained very respectful jobs.” Others shared their personal challenges: “loss of comprehensive involvement in the operation of the school division,” “my personal contacts and connections with the schools are reduced,” and there has been an “overall loss of a sense of control.”

The Directors who participated in the interview process explained that they understood the challenges that change and transitions posed for people in the organization. Cal explained that “the most important thing...was to help people overcome their sense of loss.” Doug illustrated that he understood how difficult the change was for

the people in his organization by trying to keep the former leaders in the system to help build trust and by slowing down the changes to allow people time to adjust. Ben understood that some areas of his school division were feeling disenfranchised. “They were feeling hard done by to start with because they went from the center of the universe to the far edges of our school division.” He realized that he needed to find ways to help them feel more connected to the new school division.

5. Build strong processes through the implementation of a continuous improvement cycle—Interview participants described how they used feedback from their constituents to implement a continuous improvement cycle to refine their organizational processes. Ben used the concept of decentralized school-based budgets as an example. He explained that the process started with the division office team assigning budget to each school for their regular business with the intention of making it unnecessary for the school to levy additional school fees. Through communications with the principals Ben learned about each school’s priorities and made sure that the funding was adequate. “The first year it was a topic probably every three months at the Principal’s meeting.” Ben persisted in working through the problem until the in-school administrators started to feel more confident that they had been granted sufficient funds to run all curriculum related programs that their schools offered previous to amalgamation. Doug used communication as an example. When employees explained that “they were being bombarded with central office emails,” the central office team implemented the ‘Friday File.’ All communications would be sent out to all schools in one batch on Fridays. Alexis described a similar method that she used to find a way to communicate with schools through the school principal. Each of the participants shared examples of how they

revised processes until they found successful strategies for meeting the needs of the individuals within the organization.

6. Hire an outside facilitator - Each of the four Directors shared the benefits that they had experienced due to the choice that they, or their Boards, had made to hire a facilitator to guide them through the process. Alexis explained that the facilitator in her division clarified roles of the Director and the roles of the Board. “This is [the Board’s work] and this is the Director’s work. When you get into trouble is when the Board is trying to do the Director’s work, or the Director is trying to do the Board’s work.” Cal explained how their facilitator guided them to begin the process of restructuring. “He helped us immensely by [explaining that] the first thing you have to do is issue identification....You go to your various stakeholders and ask, ‘What are your major issues?’” In Ben’s division, the Board hired one facilitator to help with hiring and a second one to help with policy governance. In Ben’s opinion, “That was the best thing we could have done.” Doug agreed that hiring a facilitator “was an important part of what the Board did” prior to the time that he started his role as the Director of Education. Overall, the four Directors recommended the assistance of an outside facilitator to assist the Board and the Director through their transitions into the new environment.

Discussion and Conclusions

When considered collectively, the four cases provided rich experiential data from which to develop understandings about leaders’ transitions. Weick (2001) introduced the idea of sense-making. He suggested that it took place retrospectively, that it was a social activity and that it was enhanced as the number of cues from the external environment increased. Applying his perspectives to the work of developing meaning in this study,

one might consider that each of the four Directors engaged in personal sense-making about their transitions both before and during the interviews. Furthermore, Weick's (2001) perspective would suggest that the Directors' understandings would be enhanced through our discussions about the topic and that my understanding would be enhanced by considering the four cases collectively. This section outlines three understandings that I developed about the transitional experiences of leaders through my study of the four cases.

Unique Circumstances Influence How Individuals Experience Transitions

The single most unexpected outcome that was reflected in the data was the apparent insignificance of the ending of the previous reality in both Cal's case and Doug's case. Bridges (2003) suggested that the intensity of an individual's experiences of the ending, the neutral zone, and the beginning varies across time in a non-linear way depending on the situation. However, Bridges was clear that individuals attach considerable significance to each of the three stages and he did not discuss the possibility of one of the three parts having little or no significance to the individual in transition.

A possible explanation for the reduced significance that Cal and Doug attached to the ending of their former position was suggested by Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman (1995) who asserted that the unique factors inherent within each individual's context, characteristics, situation, support, and strategies have an impact on that person's transitional experiences. The experiences of the four Directors clearly supported this perspective as the two Directors who were not required to change residences indicated that the ending of the old reality was somewhat insignificant within their personal journeys and the two Directors who were required to change residences indicated that the

ending was quite significant for them. Further support for this explanation can be found with Adams and Spencer (1988) who suggested that the number of transitions that an individual experiences at one time has a substantial impact on the individual's perceptions. Obviously, the two Directors who were required to change residences would experience a larger number of transitions as a result.

Another plausible explanation for the endings to seem insignificant to Cal and to Doug is offered by Woodward and Buchholz (1987) and Carrite (2000). Both studies asserted that the impact of change is decreased through detailed goal setting to create a vision for the future. Applying this perspective to the cases of Cal and Doug, it is possible to understand that their immediate focus on creating a plan for the new school division without the responsibility for closing the old school division helped them to move quickly towards the visualization of a tangible and desirable future and consequently reduced the significance of the ending of the old school division from their perspectives.

Two Phases of Uncertainty in the Neutral Zone

The second significant understanding that was developed through discussions with the four participants and collective reflection about the four cases evolved as a result of focusing more specifically on the neutral zone as it was experienced by the Directors. The participants in this study described two phases of uncertainty within the neutral zone. The initial phase of the neutral zone was characterized by awkward personal relationships between the participants and their LEADS colleagues. The participants identified a need to focus on negotiating their interpersonal relationships as the first priority. In the second phase the Directors addressed the feelings of uncertainty in the greater organization by

directing their attention to the processes that they used to build relationships within the organization and to develop systems that met the needs of the organization.

The first phase of uncertainty for each of the four Directors was resolved by redefining and stabilizing their interpersonal relationships within the work place. Alexis felt awkward as a leader bringing her school division to a close while another Director was preparing to take over the leadership. She understood that all of the individuals were sensitive to the discomfort and that they worked hard to find ways to interact comfortably. Ben confirmed the discomfort of working with the new Director in his last school division and he realized a similar awkwardness in getting to know the Directors in his new school division. Both Cal and Doug acknowledged the importance of recognizing and addressing the uncomfortable feelings of the leaders in the legacy systems in their areas. This phase was common to all cases and called for the group of people to establish norms for interpersonal behaviour. They needed to know how to work together. The Directors pinpointed this need and found a variety of ways to respond to it.

Weick (2001) helped to clarify my perception of this period by explaining that individuals feel great discomfort when they lack understanding in the situation. He asserted that during the phase of superficial simplicity individuals grab the first plausible explanation and then revise it continuously until they reach a point of profound simplicity and feel that the revised explanation satisfies the demands of the details that the individual deems important. Even for Cal and Doug who remained in their former school divisions, restructuring changed the roles and relationships between their former colleagues and necessitated the process of reforming the patterns and understandings of

those relationships. Until the individuals felt comfortable with the new patterns that they established, interpersonal relationships continued to be their first priority.

The second phase of the neutral zone that was illustrated by the cases more closely reflected the concept of repatterning that was suggested by Bridges (2003) or knowledge building as proposed by Fullan (2001). While phase one seemed to be an internal sense-making process, phase two turned outward and the leaders were able to focus on building relationships between individuals in the greater organization and developing processes to meet the needs of the new system. All four of the Directors noted the challenges of addressing the need for connection within the organization. Alexis discussed her work with the administrators' group. Ben noted the importance of building autonomy within different parts of the school division. Both Cal and Doug explicitly asserted that it was imperative for leaders to prioritize relationship building, making connections to the schools and the communities, and helping people to understand how they fit into the new organization.

Choo (1998), who explained that sense making, knowledge building, and decision making were interconnected processes that dealt with information in an organization, stated that valuable information was held by all members. He asserted that knowledge building is enhanced by finding ways to connect information from all parts of the organization. This perspective is consistent with the work of Bryan and Joyce (2007) who urged leaders to break down the barriers and collaboratively engage members of the organization in finding ways to overcome the obstacles. Similarly, the Directors described how they employed a process of trial-and-error repatterning. They put a system in place, tried it out, sought feedback and then made adjustments until the process

became more effective. In their descriptions, this process seemed to be purposeful and reflected Weick's (2001) suggestion that leaders need to help people within the organization find a plausible explanation. Like Bridges (2003) who encouraged leaders to engage in purposeful repatterning, or Fullan (2001), who proposed that leaders involve people in knowledge sharing and knowledge building, the leaders in this study invested time in building systems and relationships that helped people within the organization feel connected and knowledgeable of how things worked in the new system.

While both phases of the neutral zone suggested the uncertainty that was described in the literature and a need to establish new routines, the first phase focused on the interpersonal relationships of the Directors and the second phase focused on the organizational relationships and patterns for behaviour. All four Directors prioritized the need to build relationships within the leadership teams in the amalgamated school divisions as the first order of business. As a result of the amalgamation process, each of the newly restructured school divisions included the boundaries of several of the former school divisions. The LEADS members from the former school divisions were guaranteed employment within the restructured school divisions. Therefore, when the newly hired Directors assumed leadership roles in their new school divisions, it was important for them to negotiate their interpersonal relationships with former leaders. The Directors recognized that clarifying the relationships with these individuals was an important first step to ensuring that the restructuring initiative would be successful. Figure 5.2 illustrates how these two parts of the neutral zone could be reflected in the original conceptual framework.

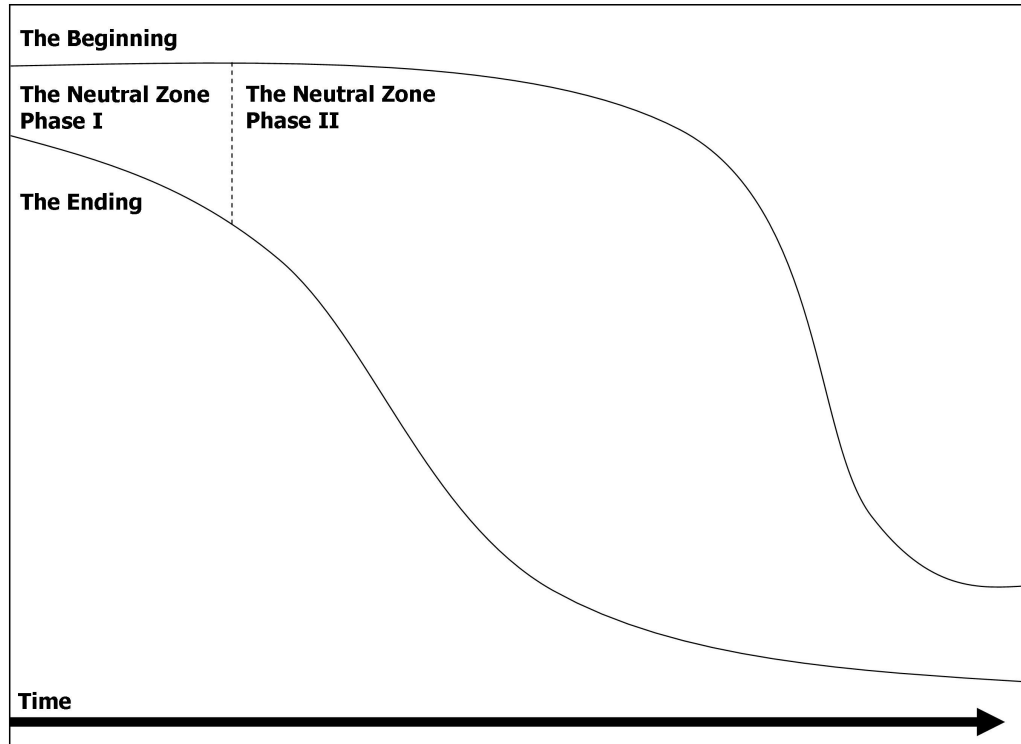


Figure 5. 2 Two Phases of the Neutral Zone

Relationship Building Is Key

The literature that was reviewed in Chapter 2 supported the perspective that it is important to focus on relationship building in the initial phases of the transition process (Goldring, Crowson, Laird, & Berk, 2003; Fullan, 2001; Kotter, 1996; Bligh, 2006). In each of the four cases the Directors of Education referred to the importance of establishing strong relationships to ensure the success of the initiative. The data indicated the personal significance that relationship building had for each of the individual participants. Initially, they reported feeling awkward until they established relationships with the people who would work most closely with them. Later, they reported the importance of collecting feedback and revising communication plans to make sure that they were building strong connections and developing trust throughout the organization. As I reflected on the data, I realized that, for the Directors of Education who participated

in this study, the process of relationship building was a key element to successfully adapting to the new environment.

The importance of relationship building was supported by Weick (2001) who identified that sense-making is a social activity; people needed to talk to each other. Additionally, he asserted that sense-making helped individuals to identify themselves within the organization. Goldring, et al. (2003) provided further support for this perspective when they suggested that it is important for leaders to take time for relationship building as a way to establish a sense of place and belonging. For the Directors, the initial process of clarifying their interpersonal relationships was considered a priority because it helped them to establish their new identities and to understand their new roles and relationships. Once they had established their interpersonal roles and responsibilities, they continued to place importance on the process of building relationships and establishing processes throughout their school divisions.

This section has outlined three significant learnings that were developed through my analysis of the transitional experiences of the four Directors. The next section recognizes the implication that those findings have for the conceptual framework.

Reflecting on the Conceptual Framework

I designed the conceptual framework, using the major concepts about transitions from the literature, to provide a lens through which I could interpret the transitional experiences of four Directors of Education during school division restructuring. I conceptualized two separate but related aspects of transitions: the personal transition, and the organizational transition. The personal transition I illustrated as a circular diagram that reflected the work of Schlossberg, et al. (1995), who explained that an individual's

transitions are dependent on his or her characteristics, situation, support, and strategies, and the work of Nicholson (1984) who explained that work role transitions are dependent upon the shift in novelty and discretion. The rectangular part of the heuristic representing the organizational transition was adapted from the work of Bridges (2003). It illustrated that transitions, which take place over time, consist of an ending, a neutral zone, and a beginning. Bridges (2003) pointed out that this process is not linear and that individuals experience the ending, the neutral zone, and the beginning all at the same time to greater or lesser degrees. To illustrate the relationship between an individual's personal transition and the organizational transitions, I placed the Venn diagram that I created to represent the personal transition within the rectangular diagram that I adapted from Bridges (2003) to represent the organizational transition.

Through my work with the transitional experiences of the four Directors of Education, I grew to understand that, rather than describing the personal transition, the unique aspects of the Directors' transitions affected the way that they experienced their transitions. Furthermore, I understood that the three phases of transition that were described by Bridges (2003) described their personal experience rather than the organizational transition. Therefore, while the two parts of the conceptual framework provided an effective lens through which to view the transitional experiences of the Directors of Education, my study of the four cases helped me to develop a better understanding of how the two parts were related to each other. The elements that were identified in the Venn diagram described the circumstances that influenced how the participants experienced the transitions and the three phases of transition represented on the rectangular drawing illustrated the participant's perception of his or her transitional

journey. The relationship between the two parts would be more accurately illustrated by placing the rectangular diagram at the very centre of the Venn diagram as in Figure 5.3. This placement illustrates that the variety of aspects described in the Venn diagram determine how the individual experiences his or her transitional journey.

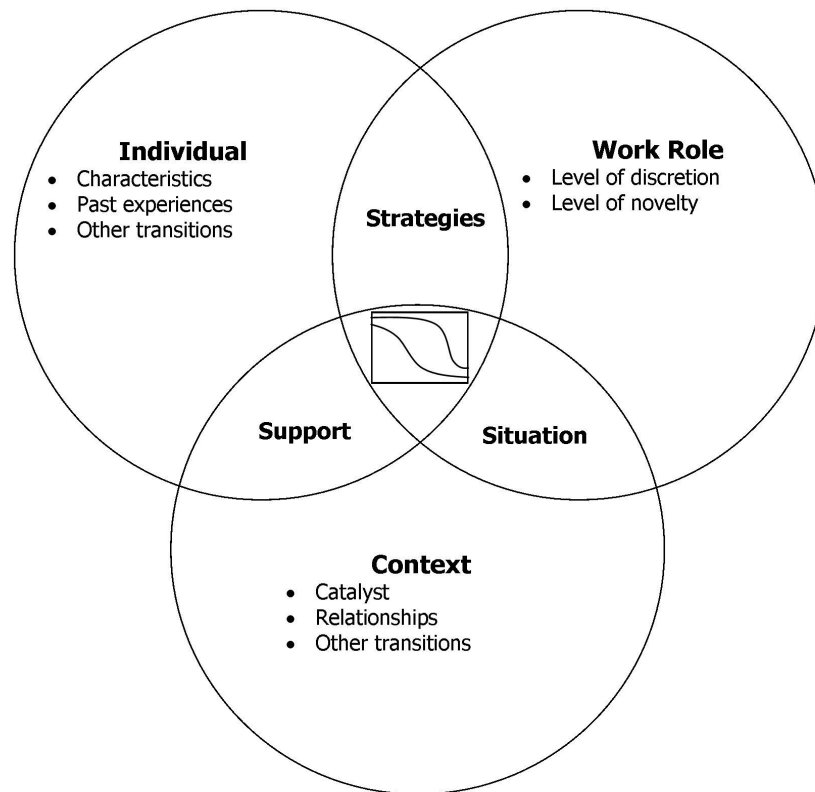


Figure 5. 3 Reconceptualization of the Conceptual Framework

The findings of the study had two other implications for the conceptual framework. First, the conceptual framework should reflect the two phases of the neutral zone that were identified by the study participants. In the initial phase participants explained that they addressed interpersonal relationship building and in the final phase they focused on building relationships throughout the organization and establishing successful processes to overcome the challenges of the new environment. Secondly, participants, who maintained their original residences and who were not required to

oversee the closing of their former school divisions, did not describe the ending of their old environments as part of their transitional experiences. Therefore, the conceptual framework should reflect the extent to which the unique circumstances of an individual's situation affected the way that they experienced their transitional journey. Although the conceptual framework was developed as a lens through which to interpret the transitional experiences of the participants, understanding how the findings reflected on the conceptual framework was a significant element in developing my own understanding of transitions.

Reconceptualizing the Study

The study design that was utilized in this study reflected my own philosophical underpinnings. As a result, I chose to use a phenomenological interviewing technique to draw out the personal experiences of four individual Directors of Education. Additionally, I chose to view their experiences through a conceptual framework that I developed from the literature. My internal tensions between the value that I place on individual experience and my underlying belief that there is a knowable and transferable element to the social world, emerged as tensions within the study itself. Therefore, in retrospect I recognize a possibility of shifting the philosophical perspective slightly so that the study would be grounded firmly within either the interpretive paradigm or the post positive paradigm.

While I believe that multiple case study methodology was an appropriate choice for this study, rather than following the work of Yin (1989) which tends to reflect a slightly more positivistic perspective, the study could be shifted to a more interpretivist framework by choosing to follow the work of Merriam (1998), or Stake (2005). That shift

in philosophy would have a significant impact on the data analysis and the function of the conceptual framework within the study. Yin (1989) encouraged researchers to compare the data to the prior research through the conceptual framework or through a set of research propositions developed as part of the study design. Merriam (1998) and Stake (2005) asked researchers to look for patterns or themes emerging from within the data and to develop understandings of the phenomenon under investigation based on those patterns.

Conversely, the study could be reconceptualized from a more positivistic perspective as well. In this case, I would choose to continue using Yin's method of multiple case study but rather than searching to understand the experiences of the leaders the study use testing to see whether or not the data collected about the leaders' transitions matched the theories of transition that were previously established by the literature. I would consider adopting a framework based in complexity theory to establish whether or not the principles of complexity theory were exhibited within the transitions of the Directors of Education. This type of study design would shift the research into the post-positive paradigm.

Shifting the philosophical viewpoint of the study would change the way that the researcher considered transitions. The data that were collected in my study could be analyzed again from either of the preceding perspectives. The knowledge that would be gained from that analysis would provide new and different perspectives about transitions of the four Directors of Education who participated in this study.

Implications of the Findings

The findings of a study suggest a particular way to understand the social phenomenon under investigation. Those suggestions are the implications that the study has for theory. Understanding the world through a particular theory will have implications for practice and for research. This section examines the implications that the three main findings of this study had for theory, practice and research.

Implications for Theory

The existing transitions theory indicated that transitions take place in three phases: the ending, the neutral zone, and the beginning (Bridges, 2003). Bridges suggested that the ending was a process of letting go and that the phase was usually accompanied by a negative emotional response.

When endings take place, people get angry, sad, frightened, depressed, and confused. These emotional states can be mistaken for bad morale, but they aren't. They are the *signs of grieving*, the natural sequence of emotions people go through when they lose something that matters to them. (Bridges, 2003, p. 28)

The findings in this study challenged that perspective. The Directors of Education, who were not required to move and who were not responsible for the closing of their old school divisions, did not associate a feeling of loss with the ending of their former roles. Therefore, the findings of my study implied that although, as Bridges (2003) has pointed out, endings are usually experienced as a loss, reducing the number of transitions or changing the unique factors that influenced an individual's transitions potentially diminishes the negative experiences associated with the ending.

The existing theory of transitions suggested that the neutral zone was characterized by uncertainty that led to repatterning within the organization (Bridges, 2003; Weick, 2001; Adams & Spencer, 2003). Although the findings in my study did not challenge that assertion, they implied that there are two distinct phases of uncertainty within the neutral zone: establishing interpersonal relationships; and repatterning organizational processes and building relationships across the organization. The four Directors of Education who participated in my study indicated that their first priority was to negotiate their interpersonal workplace relationships before they moved on to establish relationships and processes within the larger organization. Rather than suggesting a change in the way that the current theory of transitions characterizes the neutral zone, the findings in my study implied a more complex understanding of the uncertainty during that transitional phase.

Although the importance of relationship building during change was clearly established in the leadership literature (e.g., Goldring, Crowson, Laird, & Berk, 2003; Fullan, 2001; Kotter, 1996; Bligh, 2006), the existing theory of transitions did not indicate that relationship building was a significant component of an individual's transitions. Each of the Directors involved in this study indicated a need to stabilize interpersonal relationships with their colleagues as their first priority at the beginning of the restructuring process. Once they had stabilized their interpersonal relationships, they were able to focus externally on building relationships within the organization and on developing organizational systems. The findings in this study implied that transitions theory needs to include the understanding that establishing or re-establishing relationships is a key component of the transitional experience.

Current theory within the context of change leadership directs leaders to follow a series of steps or to enact certain leadership behaviours to successfully lead their organizations through change (Fullan, 2001; Kotter, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 1997; Bass & Avolio, 1994). Change leadership theory does not acknowledge that leaders of change experience transitions and the feelings of uncertainty that are associated with transitions. The findings of this study implied that the existing theories of change leadership need to include the concept that leaders' transitions are significant factors during organizational change initiatives. The leaders involved in this study indicated that during their transitions they felt uncomfortable and uncertain. In addition to leading the change event in their school divisions and managing the transitions of their subordinates, they were engaged in their own transitions.

Implications for Practice

The results of my study implied that reducing the number of transitions or changing the personal circumstances associated with transitions diminished the feelings of loss associated with the ending phase. This finding may inform hiring policies within organizations. If limiting the number of transitions makes the transition process progress more smoothly, organizations should implement a policy of promoting people from within the organization who would not be required to endure significant changes in their personal lives to accommodate changes in their work roles. Consequently, this kind of hiring practice would mean that leaders would need to focus on cultivating talent within the organization. Cal described his belief that he needed to build leaders and mused that it would be a measure of his success, if he could develop a leader who could do his job better than he could.

Another practical implication suggested by the finding that transitions are less difficult for people to handle when the number of simultaneous transitions is limited, is that organizations should implement change in small increments so that employees are not required to make a large number of transitions all at once. Leaders would need to focus on managing the rate of change. In Doug's school division they didn't rush to label their buses with the name of the new school division. Instead, they waited until they had addressed some of the relationship issues and until people identified themselves with the new organization. Doug stressed that it was important for the leader not to force change but to be patient and wait for people to adjust.

The participants in this study suggested that relationship building was a key component of managing transitions. If so, transition management strategies should include processes for building relationships throughout the organization. Leaders should plan for relationship building initiatives and should budget both human and financial resources for supporting relationship building processes. Thus the practical implication for leaders is that they need to focus attention and energy on re-establishing relationships each time they engage the organization in a change event. Additionally, relationship building processes for employees who are new to the organization must be planned and purposeful.

Finally, the participants in my study indicated that the neutral zone included two phases of uncertainty. Leaders experience feelings of uncertainty and unpredictability during organizational change just like other individuals in the organization. Organizations, therefore, should hire an outside facilitator to manage wide scale change initiatives. The leader then, is able to participate from the perspective of an individual

within the organization. The school divisions that were represented by the Directors of Education who participated in this study hired third party facilitators. The four participants each emphasized the benefits of having that outside person facilitate the process.

Implications for Further Research

The results of this study suggested that differences in the personal situations of the leaders in transition or in the number of simultaneous transitions in which an individual was engaged had a profound effect on the transitional experiences of the individual. In this study, leaders who were not required to move to a new location found the ending of the old reality to be less significant. If this finding is reflected in other populations and in other circumstances, it could provide crucial direction about how to manage transitions from an individual perspective and from an organizational perspective. Therefore, subsequent studies could be conducted to assess whether that trend continues within different populations or within different circumstances. For example, a study designed to compare the transitions of new leaders who are promoted from within the school division or within the school with the transitions of new leaders who are hired from outside the system to assess whether reducing the need for large transitions in their personal lives helped to their make work role transitions less traumatic.

The unique characteristics of the participants and their personal circumstances led to wide variations in their transitional experiences. Studies could be conducted or the data from this study could be analyzed further to develop an understanding of how some of the unique aspects of the individuals or their situations affected their transitional

experiences. Furthermore, understanding the effect that specific characteristics, like gender, motivation, leadership style, or a perceived sense of success, for example, have on leaders' transitional experiences would lead to a deeper understanding of transitions in general.

The need to negotiate awkward relationship issues that were created by the restructuring initiative and by the hiring process necessitated the focus on interpersonal relationship building at the beginning of the transitional process for the Directors in this study. However, I think it is important to understand whether this concept is peculiar to this event or whether interpersonal relationships need to be reestablished every time roles shift as a result of change. Furthermore, with the experience of shifting roles and reestablishing or renegotiating relationships, do individuals experience shifts in their personal identities. I believe that the feelings of uncertainty described by the Directors of Education must have been reflected in their leadership behaviours, and therefore, must have had an impact on their leadership during school division restructuring. I think this is the critical link between leaders' transitions and change leadership. Further research is needed to build a deeper understanding of how leaders react to their feelings of uncertainty and to establish effective strategies for coping with both the uncertainty of interpersonal relationships during change and the uncertainty of relationships and processes within the greater organization. For example, research could investigate the transitions of school leaders who work in school divisions that have a policy that mandates the transfer of school leaders to different schools every five years. How long do they endure the feelings of uncertainty associated with their transitions? Do they need to cope with shifting identity each time they are required to move? How do the experiences

of these leaders compare to the experiences of leaders who remain in their schools for longer amounts of time?

The participants in this study made it clear that relationship building was a key component of the transition process. However, further research is needed to understand whether the feelings of social uncertainty that the Directors experienced with regard to the former Directors in their new school divisions and the corresponding need to clarify relationships is common within the transition process or whether it is unique to the circumstances presented by this particular restructuring initiative. The data from this study suggested that relationship building helped the Directors of Education in this study to rebuild a sense of place and belonging within their school division. In terms of understanding leadership during change and leadership in general, I think it is important to understand how relationship building creates stability and helps people to identify themselves within the organization following a change event. Further research is needed to gain knowledge of processes that enhance relationship building within new and unfamiliar environments and to establish the connection between relationship building and identity formation within new contexts.

Part of the process of designing research requires the researcher to delimit the focus of the study. In this study, I identified a need to understand restructuring from the perspective of the individual. More specifically, I focused on the transitional experiences of the Directors of Education within the context of restructuring. Many additional studies of transitions could be derived from setting alternate delimitations. For example, it is also important to understand transitions from the perspective of a different research population like teachers, school-based administrators, students, parents, or community

members. Alternatively, it would be valuable to conduct a comparative case study with each of the cases representing a different population so that you could compare their experiences directly. Additionally, it would be interesting to keep the same research population but change the focus of the study. For example, the research could focus on the psychological processes associated with the leaders' transitions, on the losses associated with endings, or on the opportunities associated with the new beginnings. Changing any number of the delimitations would provide a variety of further studies that would provide more knowledge about transitions within the context of organizational change.

Transitions, the adaptations that are necessitated by change, cause people to feel uncertain and uncomfortable. It is essential that researchers continue to study their effects and to learn more about how individuals experience them. This section has outlined a few recommendations for further research that have been highlighted by the findings in this study. The next section expresses my final reflections on transitions, on the research process, and on the importance of this research.

Final Reflections

Throughout my career I have been fascinated by the contrast between the vision of a leader described through dialogue and discourse in our society and my personal vision that formed as a result of my own leadership experiences. In much of the leadership literature, I have perceived a socially constructed portrait of a leader who is strong, stable, and well grounded in the organization – almost larger than life. On the other hand, I know from experience that the word 'leader' refers to a role that is filled by one individual. That role has more responsibility and requires a different skill set but the

individual is, out of necessity, a real person with strengths and weaknesses. I contend that this discrepancy in understanding the leader of the organization has limited the ability to comprehend the crucial connection between leaders' transitions and organizational change. This study made that connection and explored the transitional journeys of four individuals who fulfill the role of leader within their organizations.

I was fortunate to start my graduate studies in the fall of 2005 just as the restructuring initiative was getting underway in Saskatchewan's rural school divisions. I recognized immediately that it would be an excellent environment in which to study change and leadership. During my search for a topic, one of my advisors suggested that I read Bridges (2003). I was intrigued by his notion of transitions and how they were experienced by individuals.

What if the individual in transition was the leader? During change leaders, too, experience transitions. They are also responsible for managing the transitions of others and, ironically, are charged with the task of designing the organizational changes that necessitate transitions in the first place.

Any significant change within an organization requires transitions for every individual, including the leader. A leader who is in the transition process is bound to experience uncertainty. Additionally, the results of this study suggest that a leader in transition needs to negotiate and establish interpersonal relationships, even if the change did not involve moving to a new location or working with new people. Once the interpersonal relationships have been negotiated, the uncertainty continues to exist until the processes and relationships within the organization have stabilized. An individual who is establishing or re-establishing interpersonal relationships and repatterning

processes within the organization is probably not always well grounded. Therefore, if this is the impact that transitions have on leaders, it is my opinion that it is imperative within the context of change leadership to learn more about leaders' transitions.

Although this study represents only a small step toward understanding the link between leaders' transitions and change management, within it I have found exciting possibilities. I was encouraged by the open and honest reflection of the Directors of Education because it confirmed for me that they also understood the importance of sharing the knowledge that was inherent in their experiences. Their commitment was further confirmed by the time that they generously donated from their already busy schedules and their willingness to have me visit their offices and their school divisions. I was excited to see the four narratives develop into unique pieces that seemed to take on a voice and a character that reflected my interactions with each of the participants and with their personal journeys because it reminded me that I was engaged in a process of shared meaning making. When I started to consider what I had learned from the data, I was surprised and elated that the stories showed both similarities and differences that allowed me to reflect on my own knowledge of transitions more deeply.

I have been captivated by the study of transitions and change, partly because, I am passionate about growth. I have a poster that usually hangs on the wall of my office that says, "Dandelions are my favorite flowers because they refuse to stop growing." I am consistently confronted with the opportunities for growth that exist in my small corner of the world and I am committed to finding ways to move beyond our current limitations. Knowledge of transitions and change will help me personally to break down the barriers

to growth and development within my personal life, my professional life and life within my communities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A - Letter of Invitation for Interview Participants

Dear Research Participant,

I would like to invite you to participate in the interview portion of the research that I have undertaken for my Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. The research is entitled “Restructuring and Its Impact on the Director of Education in Saskatchewan Rural School Divisions.” The purpose of the study is to understand the transitional experiences of the Directors of Education in the newly restructured rural Saskatchewan school divisions. I will use a questionnaire and interviews to collect experiential stories from you and other Directors of Education who are currently engaged in leading the school divisions through the rural school division restructuring process in Saskatchewan.

It is important for you to know that should you agree to participate, you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you will be able to choose to have any of the information that you have contributed returned to you. Throughout the study, you will be advised of any new information that may have a bearing on your decision to continue.

Your name will not appear on information that is presented about the research and will not appear in any publications of the research findings. If it is necessary to use names within the presentation of the research findings your identity will be protected through the use of a pseudonym. You will have the opportunity to verify all transcripts of our discussions and to approve references to your participation that are made in the dissertation. During the interview process you may choose to decline any question, or

request that the tape recorder be turned off for selected comments. When the study is complete the data will be stored for a minimum of five years by Dr. Larry Sackney and Dr. Bonnie Stelmach in the Department of Educational Administration (as required by the University of Saskatchewan guidelines), and will not allow for identification of any individual.

I need to advise you that given the small number of people in the research population and the unique roles that each of you have played in the restructuring process that it may not be possible to guarantee your anonymity. Therefore, I ask you to indicate, by signing the attached consent form, your agreement to participate in this research.

A copy of this letter and a copy of the consent form are provided for your records. Summaries of the completed study will be made available to each participant. Please accept, in advance, my sincere appreciation for your interest in this study. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me by telephone at 966-7613 or by email at jackie.kirk@usask.ca. My study was approved by the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Board on April 18, 2007. If you have any question about the ethical considerations of this study, please contact the Ethics Office at Room 306, Kirk Hall, 117 Science Place, Saskatoon, SK, S7N 5C8.

Yours sincerely,

Jackie Kirk

Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan

Appendix B - Letter of Invitation for Participants of the Questionnaire

Dear Research Participant,

I would like to invite you to participate in this questionnaire as part of the research that I have undertaken for my Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. The research is entitled “Restructuring and Its Impact on the Director of Education in Saskatchewan Rural School Divisions.” The purpose of the study is to understand the transitional experiences of the Directors of Education in the newly restructured rural Saskatchewan school divisions. I will use a questionnaire and interviews to collect experiential stories from you and other Directors of Education who are currently engaged in leading your school divisions through the rural school division restructuring process in Saskatchewan.

Data collected on this questionnaire will be used to construct the interview questions. It may also be quoted directly when the findings of this study are presented. The data from this study will be published and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You will be asked to confirm your consent to participate at the beginning of the survey. Feel free to leave blank any question(s) that you do not feel comfortable answering.

I need to advise you that given the small number of people in the research population and the unique roles that each of you have played in the restructuring process that it may not be possible to guarantee your anonymity. However, any proper names that have been used in the responses to the survey will not appear in any publications of the research findings. If it is necessary to use names within the presentation of the research

findings your identity will be protected through the use of a pseudonym. When the study is complete the data will be stored for a minimum of five years by Dr. Larry Sackney and Dr. Bonnie Stelmach in the Department of Educational Administration (as required by the University of Saskatchewan guidelines).

You can complete the survey that is attached to this letter and return it to the researchers in the self-addressed stamped envelope that has been provided to your school division OR you can complete the survey online at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=712133495693>

Summaries of the completed study will be made available to each participant. Please accept, in advance, my sincere appreciation for your interest in this study. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me by telephone at 966-7613 or by email at jackie.kirk@usask.ca. My study was approved by the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Board on April 18, 2007. If you have any question about the ethical considerations of this study, please contact the Ethics Office at Room 306, Kirk Hall, 117 Science Place, Saskatoon, SK, S7N 5C8.

Yours sincerely,

Jackie Kirk

Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan

Appendix C - Letter of Invitation for the Chair of the Restructuring Committee

Dear Research Participant,

I would like to invite you to participate in an interview designed to contribute background information for the research that I have undertaken for my Doctor of Philosophy degree in Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan. The research is entitled “School Division Restructuring and Its Impact on the Director of Education in Saskatchewan Rural School Divisions.” The purpose of the study is to understand the transitional experiences of the Directors of Education in the newly restructured rural Saskatchewan school divisions. I will use a questionnaire and interviews to collect information about the restructuring initiative as it was implemented and to collect the experiential stories from the Directors of Education who are currently engaged in leading their school divisions through the rural school division restructuring process in Saskatchewan.

It is important for you to know that should you agree to participate, you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, you will be able to choose to have any of the information that you have contributed returned to you. Throughout the study, you will be advised of any new information that may have a bearing on your decision to continue.

Your name will not appear on information that is presented about the research and will not appear in any publications of the research findings. If it is necessary to use names within the presentation of the research findings your identity will be protected through the use of a pseudonym. You will have the opportunity to verify all transcripts of our discussions and to approve references to your participation that are made in the

dissertation. During the interview process you may choose to decline any question, or request that the tape recorder be turned off for selected comments. When the study is complete the data will be stored for a minimum of five years by Dr. Larry Sackney and Dr. Bonnie Stelmach in the Department of Educational Administration (as required by the University of Saskatchewan guidelines), and will not allow for identification of any individual.

I ask you to indicate, by signing the attached consent form, your agreement to participate in this research. A copy of this letter and a copy of the attached consent form are provided for your records. Summaries of the completed study will be made available to each participant. Please accept, in advance, my sincere appreciation for your interest in this study.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me by telephone at 966-7613 or by email at jackie.kirk@usask.ca. My study was approved by the University of Saskatchewan Ethics Board on April 18, 2007. If you have any question about the ethical considerations of this study, please contact the Ethics Office at Room 306, Kirk Hall, 117 Science Place, Saskatoon, SK, S7N 5C8.

Yours sincerely,

Jackie Kirk

Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Educational Administration, University of Saskatchewan

Appendix D – Consent Form for Interviewees

You are invited to participate in a study entitled “School Division Restructuring and Its Impact on the Directors of Education in Saskatchewan Rural School Systems”.

Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.

Researcher(s):

Jackie Kirk, Student, Department of Educational Administration, 306-966-7613

Dr. Larry Sackney, Department of Educational Administration, 306-966-7626

Dr. Bonnie Stelmach, Department of Educational Administration, 306-966-7622

Purpose and Procedure: The purpose of the study is to understand the transitional experiences of the Directors of Education in the newly restructured rural Saskatchewan school divisions.

Potential Risks: The data from this study will be published and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although I will report direct quotations from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information (list relevant possibilities such as the name of the institution, the participant’s position etc.) will be removed from the report.

Because the participants for this study have been selected from a small group of people, all of whom are known to each other, it is possible that you may be identifiable to other people on the basis of what you have said.

After your interview, and prior to the data being included in the final report, you will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit.

Potential Benefits: Although the leader plays a unique role in any change initiative, he or she is also a person who is impacted by the change and therefore must also endure the transition process while undertaking the actions of leadership. The personal stories of transition will link practice and research. Well designed theory is like a black and white skeleton of reality. On the other hand, stories are filled with color and emotion. The lived experience and the theory are complimentary partners one providing what the other one lacks.

The existing body of research that examines leadership during times of organizational change is primarily focused on the external actions of the leader and how those actions impact the organization. Successful leadership is a result of a complex web of perception created by the leader in an attempt to match the factors in the external environment with his or her internal knowledge. Therefore, it is important to know and to study both the external actions and the internal sense-making of leaders to truly understand the

dynamics of change. This study will help to make that connection by recording the reflections of the Directors of Education.

Storage of Data: During the study, all data will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office at #3066 in the Education Building. Following the completion of the study, the data will be securely stored and retained by Dr. Larry Sackney and Dr. Bonnie Stelmach (Department of Educational Administration) for a minimum of five years in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan guidelines.

Confidentiality: All data will be treated as confidential information and will not be shared with anyone except the researchers and the individual participant until both parties agree that it is free from identifying information and that it reflects the experiences of the participant adequately. At that point participants will be asked to sign a Data/Transcript Release Form to indicate their agreement.

The data from this study will be published and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although I will report direct quotations from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information (name, school division, and communities) will be removed from the report. Moreover, the consent forms will be stored separately from the transcripts, so that it will not be possible to associate a name with any given set of responses. Please do not put your name or other identifying information on any of the materials.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty. If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed at your request. If there are any changes to the procedures during the course of the study, the researcher will advise the participant of any new information that could have a bearing on their decision to participate. In the event that changes are necessary, participants will be notified by mail and be asked to once again give consent to participate.

Questions: If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided above if you have questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on (insert date). Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Ethics Office (966-2084). Out of town participants may call collect. A summary of the results of this study will be circulated to all research participants.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.”

(Name of Participant)	(Date)
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(Signature of Participant)	(Signature of Researcher)
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Appendix E - Directors of Education Questionnaire

Consent - If you do not wish to participate in this study, place a check mark in the box below and return this form to the researchers in the postage paid envelope via Canada Post.

I do not wish to participate in this study.

Your consent to participate in this study will be indicated by your decision to respond to the following items and return the questionnaire to the researchers in the postage paid envelope via Canada Post.

If you agree to participate:

Please answer the following questions in as much detail as possible. The information that you provide will be used both as primary data for the research and as a way to choose themes for the interviews.

If you would prefer to participate in the questionnaire via the online format, please navigate to: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=712133495693> Follow the onscreen directions to complete the survey. Thank-you for your participation!

1. Bridges (2003) suggests, that the transitions associated with wide-scale change initiatives are difficult for all people who are impacted by the change because “the starting point for dealing with the transition is not the outcome but the ending that you’ll have to make to leave the old situation behind” (p.7). What are some of the transitions

that you experienced in leaving your old position behind to join the restructured school division?

2. What made those transitions easier for you?
3. Did you experience any losses as a result of the transitions?
4. Wheatley (2005) says that, “[a]s people are engaged in the difficult and messy processes of participation, they are simultaneously creating the conditions – new relationships, new insights, greater levels of commitment – that facilitate more rapid and complete implementation” (p. 89). What are the positive outcomes that you experienced while being involved in the process of creating the new school divisions?
5. Are there particular points in the restructuring process that stand out for you as being significant to your personal transition experiences?
6. Please feel free to make any other comments about the restructuring process.
7. If you are currently a Director of Education in one of the newly restructured school divisions, would you agree to participate in the interview portion of this study? To indicate your interest please call Jackie Kirk at 966-7613 or email her at jackie.kirk@usask.ca (Each volunteer will participate three interviews of approximately 2 hours each.)

Appendix F - Interview with the Restructuring Committee Chair

1. When was the Restructuring Committee struck?
2. What were the terms of reference for the restructuring committee?
3. Who was asked to be a part of the Restructuring Committee?
4. What was the role of the Restructuring Committee in the rural school division restructuring initiative?
5. What were the major outcomes of the Restructuring Committee?
6. Is the Restructuring Committee finished with its work in the restructuring process?
7. Did the Restructuring Committee consider the personal transitions that would be required for people who were involved in the rural restructuring initiative?
8. How did you go about doing your work?
9. What issues did you encounter? How did you resolve those issues?
10. Any other comments about the work of the restructuring committee?

Appendix G - Interview Questions

Appendix G illustrates the plans that I have made for conducting the three interviews outlined by Seidman (2006). The purpose of the first interview is to collect as much information as possible about the life history of the participants as it relates to the phenomenon under investigation. In the second interview, I will elicit the stories of the transitional experiences of the Directors of Education during the recent restructuring initiative. Finally, in interview three I will ask participants to join with me in making connections between their life history stories and their transitional stories to articulate what they have learned from their transitional experiences.

Interview #1 – The Life History Interview

7. Using examples as illustration, describe your life as a student, a teacher, and an educational administrator.
8. What stories would people that have known you along the way use to describe the path that you have taken to become a leader? Try to think back to the first moments when you or someone else became aware of your leadership abilities. Tell me about your experiences as a leader at several points along the way.
9. Describe the life-shaping events that have led you to this place in your life.
10. Tell me about your relationship with the people who have been significant in your life.
11. Describe some of your experiences with change in your life. How have you reacted to change in the past?

12. Describe some of the transitional experiences that you experienced prior to the most recent restructuring initiative. Were any of those experiences related to organizational change? Were any of those experiences related to your work roles?

Interview # 2 – The Details of the Experience Interview

At the end of the first interview I will distribute a timeline activity to each of the research participants to allow them some time to reflect on the significant moments along their way prior to the second interview. It will include the following question:

Please illustrate the significant points of your personal journey along a timeline beginning in November 2004 when the boundary map was accepted and continuing through to the current date when the newly restructured school division has been operational for more than a year. The events that you include in the timeline can be either personal or professional in nature. They simply need to represent the significant moments in your transition to your new role within the new organization. You may wish to include your memories from the following time periods: a) the announcement that the Education Equity Task Force had been struck to draw up the boundaries for the new school divisions, b) the publication of the first draft of the map, c) the process of revision of the map, d) the publication of the final map, e) the elections of the Board of Education, f) the hiring of the Directors of Education, g) the fall of 2005 before the school division was legally established, h) 2006 when the school division was established, i) the current period (2006-07) establishing school division identity, and/or j) any other points in the process.

During the second interview, the following questions will be used to prompt the stories and to elicit further details about the significant events that are brought out through the use of the timeline on which the Directors have independently identified the significant points in their personal transitions:

1. Use examples from your experiences with organizational restructuring to tell me how school division level administrators experience the transitions associated with organizational restructuring. What have you learned from your experiences?
2. Using examples from your recent experiences, tell me about the contextual factors that influenced your transitional experiences.
3. Tell me the story of how you coped with the transitions that you experienced as a result of the recent restructuring initiative.
4. Tell me about your life at the time that you received the news that your “old” school division would be disestablished. Describe the impact that the announcement had on you.
5. I am interested in understanding how “you” as a person interact with “you” as a leader. Describe some experiences that you have had since the beginning of the restructuring initiative that have caused you to think about your individual self as compared to your professional self.
6. Once things had been settled and you knew what your new position was going to be, what transitions did you need to make?
7. What made those transitions easier for you? Use examples that will illustrate the people or events that helped you to make the transitions.

8. What losses did you experience as a result of the transition? Tell me more about those experiences.
9. What growth did you experience as a result of the transition? Tell me more about those experiences. How did you recognize that you had experienced growth?
10. What major issues or conflicts did you confront during the transition? Tell me the story of those conflicts or issues. What led to the conflict or issue? How was it resolved?
11. What surprises or unexpected events did you encounter? Tell me about those events. What led to the event? What was the outcome?

Interview #3 – The Reflection on Meaning Interview

The purpose of the third interview is to confirm that I have represented the individual's case appropriately and to engage the participant in a discussion about the understandings that were developed from the case. In this interview, we (the participant and I) will review the first draft of the collective narrative.

I will use the following questions to guide my preparation for the third interview and I will try to address items that are specific to each individual's stories about transitions:

1. Did the case that I prepared to represent your experiences appropriately reflect your experiences?
2. Are there any changes that you would like me to make to reflect your experiences more accurately?

3. After describing what I learned from their case...Does my understanding, as I have described it, reflect your own knowledge of your experiences?

4. Do you have anything to add that has occurred to you during our discussions?

Appendix H – Data/Transcript Release Form

Restructuring and Its Impact on the Directors of Education in Saskatchewan Rural School
Divisions – Data/Transcript Release Form

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interview in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my personal interview with Jackie Kirk. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to researchers, Jackie Kirk, Dr. Larry Sackney, and Dr. Bonnie Stelmach, from the Department of Educational Administration to be used in the manner described in the consent form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Name of Participant Date

Signature of Participant

Signature of researcher

Appendix I – Instructions for Online Participation in Questionnaire

If you would prefer to participate in the questionnaire via the online format, please navigate to:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=712133495693>

Follow the onscreen directions to complete the survey. Thank-you for your participation!

Yours sincerely,

Jackie Kirk

Appendix J - Timeline of the Restructuring Initiative

January 8, 2004 – Release of Finding the Balance: The final report of the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education compiled by Ray Boughen

May 13, 2004 – Government responds to Finding the Balance: The final report of the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education and announces restructuring, the formation of the Education Equity Task Force of three people, a moratorium on school closure

May 19, 2004 – Members of the Education Equity Task Force were named

June 24, 2004 - Speech by the Honourable Andrew Thomson, Minister of Learning on behalf of Premier Lorne Calvert to the Special Provincial Assembly of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association Wednesday, June 23, 2004 – This speech included additional information on each of the aspects of the restructuring initiative including a review of the reasons for amalgamation, the creation of the Restructuring Committee, the formation of School Community Councils, and the moratorium on school closures.

June 24, 2004 – First meeting of the re-established Restructuring Committee.

August 3, 2004 – Release of a preliminary map that meets the criteria that was set out of the Education Equity Task Force.

August/September 2004 – Education Equity Task Force meets with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF), the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents (LEADS), the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials (SASBO), the Saskatchewan Association of School Councils (SASC), the Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA), the Urban Section of SSBA, and the Catholic Section of SSBA.

August 17, 2004 Through October 22, 2004 – Education Equity Task Force meets with individual Boards of Education.

November 12, 2004 – Minister Thompson announces the acceptance of the school division boundaries map that was compiled by the Education Equity Task Force.

April 19, 2005 – New school divisions become legal entities.

May 31, 2005 – Craig Melvin and the Local Accountability and Partnerships Panel (LAPP) publish their report.

June 15, 2005 – Election for Board of Education members for the new school divisions.

June 23-25, 2005 – Orientation for new boards presented by Saskatchewan School Boards Association supported by Saskatchewan Learning

July 27 & 28, 2005 – Director of Education interviews held at the Travelodge in Regina

July 29, 2005 – Director of Education interviews held at the Quality Inn (Hilton) in
Saskatoon

September 26, 2005 – Andrew Thompson releases the report of the Local Accountability
and Partnerships Panel.

November 23, 2005 – Minister Andrew Thompson released a response to the LAPP
report and announced the implementation of School Community Councils to be
established in every school.

January 01, 2006 – New school divisions become operational

Appendix K –Restructuring Bulletins

Restructuring Bulletin No. 1, February 1, 2005: Guidelines for Roles and Responsibilities of Existing and New Boards of Education in 2005:

http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/adx/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=1104,225,134,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=1550&Filename=EEL_Feb05Bulletin.pdf

The new school divisions were established and Boards of Education were elected by June 15, 2005, but did not become operational until January 1, 2006. Until that time, the original school divisions continued to operate under their existing Boards of Education. This first restructuring bulletin sought to explain the role of the newly elected board of education during the period from their election until December 31, 2005. The role of the newly elected Board, as outlined by *Restructuring Bulletin No. 1*, was to organize for the beginning of the new school division while the role of the legacy board⁶ was to operate the old school division and prepare it for closure. The new board needed to hire a Director of Education and a Secretary Treasurer, choose a suitable location for the division office, prepare an interim budget for operations until December 2005, develop a plan for records retention, and a plan for bringing the old school divisions together. The first restructuring bulletin outlined those tasks in a point by point “to-do” list format.

⁶ The terms legacy board or legacy system will be used to describe the original school divisions that were amalgamated to form the newly restructured division.

Restructuring Bulletin No. 2, February 16, 2005: Elections for Board Members of the Restructured School Divisions:

http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=1104,225,134,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=1549&Filename=EEL_Feb16Bulletin.pdf

Bulletin No. 2 stated that the Minister had announced the Election Day of June 15, 2005. It went on to say that although the *Education Act* (1995) stipulated that the Minister could provide an election for the first Board of Education for a new school division, the act would be amended so that board members elected in the June 2005 elections would not be required to run for re-election in the regularly scheduled elections in October 2006. Additionally, this bulletin included a chart that outlined all of the important dates for the elections.

Restructuring Bulletin No. 3, May 17, 2005: Records Retention and Disposal

Information:

http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=1104,225,134,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=1548&Filename=EEL_May17BulletinA.pdf

A Board of Education is required to preserve all public documents of their division until their disposal is authorized by a resolution of the Board and is approved by the Minister of Learning. However, many of the documents must be retained indefinitely and others must be stored for at least ten years. *Bulletin No. 3* outlined the guidelines that school divisions should use for dealing with the retention and disposal of the financial records,

the student records, and the employment records that would become their responsibility as smaller school divisions closed their doors.

Restructuring Bulletin No. 4, May 17, 2005: Guidelines for the Selection of the Director of Education and the Secretary Treasurer in Restructured School Divisions:

http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/adx/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=1104,225,134,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=1547&Filename=EEI_May17BulletinB.pdf

The Fourth bulletin delineated the details for the hiring of Directors of Education and Secretary Treasurers. Boards were given the choice of whether they wanted to hold an internal or an external hiring competition for the position of Director. If the board chose to engage in an external hiring procedure the bulletin recommended that they should participate in an interview schedule that would be facilitated provincially by the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. The outlined dates provided a crossover between the timeline for hiring the Director and the timeline for hiring the Secretary Treasurer and ensured that the Director would be in place by August 15th to assist with interviewing the Secretary Treasurer on August 29th.

Restructuring Bulletin No. 5, May 25, 2005: Land Title Fees:

http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=1104,225,134,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=1546&Filename=EEI_Bulletin5_LandFees.pdf

Bulletin No. 5 reminded board members of the sections of the *Education Act* (1995) that direct how land titles and assets were to be transferred from the old school divisions to the new school division. It instructed legacy boards to create a list of assets and liabilities and announced training for school division officials who would be in-charge of working with the transfer of land titles from one school division to the next.

Restructuring Bulletin No. 6, May 25, 2005: Sale/Disposal of Schools:

http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=1104,225,134,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=1545&Filename=EEI_Bulletin6_SchoolSales.pdf

The sixth bulletin outlined the guidelines to be used when selling schools. Generally, the bulletin explained that any money made from the sale of schools would be applied to the next capital project in the school division.

Restructuring Bulletin No. 7, May 25, 2005: Partnership/Tuition Agreements during Restructuring:

http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=1104,225,134,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=1544&Filename=EEI_Bulletin7_Partnership_Tuition.pdf

Bulletin No. 7 clarified that new Boards of Education would be required to honor any partnerships and tuition agreements that were held by the previous boards. It also directed existing boards to evaluate and prioritize existing agreements so that new boards would know which agreements needed to be dealt with immediately. Additionally, *Bulletin No. 7* stated that agreements that would be split between two new school divisions would be honored in both of the new school divisions.

Restructuring Bulletin No. 8, May 25, 2005: Determining a School Division Office

Location:

http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=1104,225,134,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=1543&Filename=EEI_Bulletin8_DivOffice_Location.pdf

Bulletin No. 8 provided guidelines for deciding where to establish the school division office. In addition to outlining a number of criteria for selecting the office, *Bulletin No. 8* reminded Boards that they would need to be transparent about the criteria that they had used to make the decision.

Restructuring Bulletin No. 9, May 25, 2005: Initial Meetings of New Boards of Education:

http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=1104,225,134,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=1542&Filename=EEL_Bulletin9_Initial_Meetings.pdf

The ninth bulletin outlined the agenda items for the first few meetings of the Board of Education. Like many of the other bulletins, this one sought to make Boards aware of their responsibilities as dictated by *The Education Act* (1995).

Restructuring Bulletin No. 10, May 25, 2005: Funding for Capital Projects:

http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=1104,225,134,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=1541&Filename=EEL_Bulletin10_Capital_Funding.pdf

This bulletin explained that the Department of Learning would honor all capital project commitments that it had made to school divisions prior to restructuring. Although the Department's share of the cost of the capital project is based on the tax assessment in the school division, the Department agreed to maintain the agreed upon cost sharing percentages until March 31, 2007 at which time a new agreement would be made.

Restructuring Bulletin No. 11, May 25, 2005: Developing Structures and Agreements to Replace Comprehensive High School Boards of Education:

http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=1104,225,134,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=1540&Filename=EEL_Bulletin11_Comprehensive.pdf

When *Bulletin No. 11* was published three Comprehensive School Boards of Education existed in the province in Estevan, Melville, and Swift Current. These boards were comprised of representatives of partnering boards that had a stake in the facility. *Bulletin No. 11* explained that these boards would cease to exist as of December 31, 2005, but that any tuition agreements that were currently in place to support the operation of the school would remain in effect until the new boards negotiated a new agreement.

Restructuring Bulletin No. 12, May 25, 2005: Guidelines for the Transition of Human Resources in Restructured School Divisions:

http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=1104,225,134,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=1538&Filename=EEL_Bulletin12_HR.pdf

This bulletin cautioned school divisions to pay attention to contracts and agreements and to treat all employees with due process and respect during the upcoming transition. It stressed that Boards needed to anticipate the necessary staff compliment for the new school division as soon as possible. The bulletin also pointed out the importance of open communication between employees and the school division and suggested that Boards invite employees to express their preferences given the situation.

Restructuring Bulletin No. 13, May 25, 2005: Transition Funding for Restructuring

School Divisions:

http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=1104,225,134,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=1536&Filename=EEI_Bulletin13_Transition_Funding.pdf

Bulletin No. 13 set out three components of the transitional funding that would be available to school divisions. Money would be available for the out-of-cycle elections costs to run the June 15, 2005 election, for expenditures of the new board until December 31, 2005, and for costs associated with the transition for restructured boards after January 1, 2006. This bulletin detailed each of the expenditures that would be covered by the transition funding and explained how Boards could apply to be reimbursed for the costs. Finally, it outlined the maximum amounts that were available for each school division and illustrated how the maximum values had been calculated.

Restructuring Bulletin # 13(a):

<http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=1104,225,134,107,81,1,Documents&MediaID=1537&Filename=Transition+Funding+Bulletin+13a.pdf>

On November 25, 2005, *Bulletin No. 13(a)* was published to assist school divisions in interpreting *Bulletin No. 13*.