The Nature of the Professional Leadership Culture and its Perceived Relationship to Student Learning

A Dissertation Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Educational Administration

University of Saskatchewan

Saskatoon

by:

Robert Liggett

June, 2016

PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Postgraduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying this dissertation in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor who supervised my dissertation work or, in her absence, by the Head of the Department or Dean of the College in which my dissertation work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this dissertation or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my dissertation.

Requests for permission to copy or make other use of material in this thesis in whole or in part should be addressed to:

Head of the Department of Educational Administration
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan
28 Campus Drive
Saskatoon, SK. S7N 0X1
Canada

OR

Dean
College of Graduate Studies and Research
University of Saskatchewan
107 Administration Place
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7N 5A2
Canada

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study was to examine the perceptions of school-level professionals regarding the nature of the professional leadership culture and its perceived relationship to student learning. For the purposes of this study, the professional leadership culture was defined as shared assumptions, practices, beliefs, and values concerning leadership activities that were understood and practised among professional members.

There is a wealth of research and theory relating to school culture (e.g. Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011); yet there remains a gap in our understanding of how *professional leadership culture* is developed and sustained, and how this phenomenon relates to student learning within the school. There has also been an increasing volume of research on the impact of formal (administrative) leadership on student learning (Leithwood, 2011). However, research into the impact of the professional leadership culture more generally has been scant.

Schein's (2010) organizational culture and leadership model provided the theoretical support for the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data. A qualitative case study approach was used. Qualitative data were collected from one school (pre K to 8) in one urban school division. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with school administrators and teachers. Researcher observations of school level professional interactions were also used as a complementary data source. This study provided support for Schein's model, though several elaborations were made, based on the professional contexts of this case.

Regarding the professional leadership culture of the school, professionals recognized professional leadership culture as a group phenomenon rather than an

individual one. By far the most pronounced and frequent representations of the professional leadership culture were: the pervasiveness of collaboration among professionals, a culture of trust, and a supportive environment. It was apparent that these qualities had, over time, become significantly embedded in the culture of the school.

The practice of shared leadership in the form of co-teaching was viewed as a major influence on student learning at this school. At this school, teachers exerted their influence on student learning by modelling working together. They believed that one strong way to improve student learning was through collaboration. Teachers also agreed that administrative leadership built on the sharing of leadership between teachers and administration also had an indirect influence on student learning, mainly through administrative collaboration and through the priority given to support for teachers.

Implications from this study prompt some reflection for theory building around the nature and role of context in organizational culture. Suggested areas for future research included replication studies in other school contexts, and studies eliciting the voices of parents, students, community, and various other school professionals as pertain to improving student learning through the building of relationships. The study also raises questions about the nature and roles of the professional leadership school subcultures: how these are related to the broader culture and how a study of these subcultures may extend theories related to organizational culture.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I submit this dissertation I must acknowledge several individuals.

To my gifted, patient advisor, Dr. Patrick Renihan, thank you for your generosity, enthusiasm, great sense of humour, encouragement, and faith in me. You have an incredible capacity to be there with guidance and to ensure that I would meet my goal. Your sound and succinct advice helped me to see the forest through the trees. I am forever grateful for your mentorship and support. I share the joy of a completed document with you.

To my committee members, Dr. David Burgess, Dr. Paul Newton, Dr. Vicki Squires, Dr. Keith Walker, and Dr. Beverley Brenna, your feedback and suggestions have been most helpful. Each of you have expertise, skills, and qualities that I greatly respect. Thank you for your experienced insights; you challenged me to consider alternate ways of thinking that added to my writing and to my learning expertise. Additional thanks are extended to my external examiner, Dr. Dan Laitsch. Your suggestions were most welcomed and improved the quality of my final document.

I extend my thanks to the Department of Education administration and guidance from Dr. Paul Newton as well as discussions and moral support from my professors, cohorts, and colleagues. Additionally, I am appreciative to the Saskatchewan Education Leadership Unit that provided me with scholarships, support, and encouragement as a doctoral candidate; and in particular, thank you Patricia Prowse, Cecile Laprairie, Norman Dray, and Brian Keegan.

Thank you to my employer, North East School division for the opportunity to take an educational leave these past two years. This educational journey has been very rewarding, and I am privileged to work in an environment that supports professional development opportunities.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support during these last two years. I know that you all have supported me in your way during the time required to finish this work. I find it hard to believe that the journey is complete!

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Kyla Jean Herman (BSP, 1995), whose enduring support has been instrumental in my success. I know that you have made sacrifices over the past many years so that I could go to school again and specifically during the time required to finish this work, thank you for your patience, and understanding. I could not have finished this journey without you and I feel truly blessed to have you in my life. Thank you for encouraging me to take *the road less traveled*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLE

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It has been my experience that parents, principals, teachers and students often sense something special and undefined about the schools in which they are involved. I have always suspected that this is in someway related to culture of the school. In my subsequent readings of organizational theory, this prompted me to explore more deeply the nature of culture within organizations, particularly in schools as organizations. Peterson and Deal (1998) found that while culture in educational settings is hard to define and difficult to put a finger on, culture is extremely powerful. It influences everything that goes on in schools: how staff dress, what they discuss, their willingness to change, the practice of instruction and the emphasis placed on student and teacher learning (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Simply put, school culture matters (Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

In this study, I investigated the nature of the professional leadership culture in one school and its connection to student learning.While the relationship of school leadership to educational outcomes has been widely debated (Hattie, 2009; Leithwood, 2011; Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Levin 2001; Robinson & Timperley, 2007), the research evidence is strong that leadership positively impacts professional relationships and that professional relationships positively impact student learning (Doyle, 2004; Fullan, 2005; Guskey & Sparks, 2002).

The Impact of Leadership on Student Learning

Glatter (2009) affirmed that, "a key requirement for leaders is to create and sustain a climate that is conducive to learning, both in the way that work is allocated and organized and also in the quality of the interpersonal relationships fostered" (p. 234). Foster (1989) described leadership as a modern need, a deep desire to both be in control of our circumstances and to be able to change them for the better (p. 39). Early research by Firestone and Seashore Louis (1999) in Canadian high schools indicated that the most important leadership behaviours are creating a vision, setting high expectations for performance, creating consensus around group goals and developing an intellectual, stimulating, climate.

Significant attention has been devoted in recent years to the relationship of school leadership to student learning. Various studies (Guskey & Sparks 2002; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hattie, 2009; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Robinson & Timperely, 2007) found that there is mostly an indirect effect of school leadership on student learning. Hallinger and Heck (1996) stated, "Although it is theoretically possible that principals do exert some direct effort on student achievement (as measured by student outcomes), it is mostly inextricably tied to the actions of others in the school" (p. 24). This comment turns a much needed spotlight on the nature of the professional leadership culture of the school. Though the researchers identified above addressed leadership as it pertains to *formal* leadership roles, this study will argue that their findings are also relevant to other models of leadership that involve a variety of school actors.

Organizational Culture of Schools

Peterson and Deal (1998) found that while culture in schools is hard to define and difficult to put a finger on, culture is extremely powerful. It influences everything that goes on in schools: how staff dress, what they discuss, their willingness to change, the practice of instruction and the emphasis placed on student and teacher learning (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Simply put, school culture matters (Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011).

Demers (2007) suggested that the concept of culture could be simply defined as 'the way we do things around here' and that it is conceived as emerging from a people's history (p. 76). Demers (2007) noted that the one element that is inherent in the notion of a culture is that it applies to a group or a collective. The notion of culture is used to explain the existence of collective patterns of thinking and behaviour. Some writers argue that organizations *have* cultures while others insist that organizations *are* cultures (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Other writers have approached culture from a systems perspective. Kaplan et al., (2013) noted out that schools are complicated places and multifaceted organisms. They added, "Clearly, schools are not simply buildings with people inside. They are systems. Each part is dependent upon the other parts, and changes in one part cause cascading reactions in all the parts. In order to transform schools, therefore, it is necessary to consider the effects on all the parts of the enterprise" (p. 5). Kaplan et al., (2013) suggested that school culture creates a psychosocial environment that strongly impacts teachers, administrators and students and that everything in the organization is affected by its culture and its particular forms and features.

Demers (2007) noted that if the organization succeeds in its environment, then the culture is reinforced. Firestone and Seashore Louis (1999) found that organizational culture has been transformed from an arcane academic concept to a staple of management thinking. Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) added, "Organizational culture develops as the group responds to any challenges in its environment" (p. 7). MacNeil, Prater and Busch (2009) indicated that organizational theorists have long reported that paying attention to culture is the most important action that leaders can perform.

The Leadership – Culture Connection

Reeves (2006) suggested, "The task of the leader is to create an organization that is exemplary in every dimension and not engage in behaviours suggesting that a single person bears the burden of exemplary performance in every area" (p.24). Further to this point, Schein (2010) found that the nature of leadership and building a culture are intertwined. He asserted, "These dynamic processes of culture creation and management are the essence of leadership and make you realize that leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin" (2010, p. 3). Schein observed that understanding the connection between leadership and culture allows us to understand ourselves better. Hopefully, this will in turn lead to building positive relationships among various educational stakeholders, which are crucial to establishing a culture focused on improving schools.

Statement of the Problem

Chamberlain (2005) suggested that what we learn through our culture becomes our reality, and for us to see beyond that is often difficult. Although culture may be a nebulous concept in a reality where administrators need concrete results in student learning, linking culture and student learning may allow administrators to re-focus their

energies and attention on more human aspects of school leadership. This study enters into an investigation regarding the nature of the professional leadership culture within a school and its perceived connection to student learning.

Barth (2006) asserted, "The nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else" (p. 9). Barth put forth the premise that it is the relationships among the educators in a school that define and shape a school's culture. He categorized relationships in four ways. He found that if the relationships between administrators and teachers were trusting and cooperative, then the school would show evidence of teachers working collaboratively to create an interdependent or collegiate culture. Barth defined this united culture of collegiality and congeniality as one that nurtures growth on the part of teachers as teachers talk about their instructional practices and share their expertise with one another. However, Barth noted that when the culture of schools reflects an adversarial relationship exemplified by fear, competition and suspicion, these qualities encompass the entire school. He found that in competitive cultures, teachers begin to guard their skills and conceal what they do from other educators as a means to protect themselves.

If we accept Barth's statement that it is the nature of relationships among the adults in schools that have the greatest potential to shape the culture of the school and impact student learning, we would be wise to try to better understand the lived experiences of professional educators working collaboratively.

Peterson (1997) claimed that schools have the quest for school improvement has the best chance of success when those individuals involved in the process work

collaboratively to identify and solve problems. Kaplan and Owings (2013) noted that school cultures may be weak or strong. They added that a complex network in which members routinely connect around shared problems and goals is one quality that defines a strong culture of interconnectedness. Further researchers have consistently pointed out that school culture does matter when it comes to student learning (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Kaplan & Owings, 2013; Kruse & Seashore Louis, 2009; Peterson & Deal, 1998; White, Martin & Johnson, 2003). It is for further research to shed light upon the forms of organizational culture that help school professionals bring this to reality.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to examine the perceptions of school-level professionals regarding the nature of the professional leadership culture and its perceived relationship to student learning in one school.

Research Questions

The main research questions were:

1. What patterns relating to professional leadership culture are perceived by school level professionals to exist within their school?

2. What is the perceived relationship between this culture and student learning according to these professionals?

Significance of the Study

In an era when the demands for better schools, higher student learning, and school accountability are intense, any factor that directly affects an increase in student learning must be taken seriously. Arguably, the ultimate goal of education is to improve and extend student learning. The need for all to share and take responsibility in the academic

success of students has made it imperative that schools evaluate their role and success in engaging stakeholders in partnerships. Ultimately, if education is going to change for the better, it is through our collaborative efforts. Kruse and Seashore Louis (2009) noted, "Rather than working in isolation, people work together, which means that the school's efforts are expanded rather than duplicated" (p. 171). We are all working to create better schools where every student succeeds (Buffum, Mattos & Weber, 2009; Fullan, 2005; Kruse et al., 2009; Kaplan & Owings, 2013). Though this study is devoted predominantly to the relationships among professionals (teachers and administrators) within the school, it will have implications for future studies of the cultures of collaboration and partnership involving other stakeholders.

Another significant aspect of this study is that while there is a wealth of research and theory relating to school culture research, there remains a gap in our understanding of how professionals define their prevailing professional leadership culture, and how this perception relates to student learning within the school. Demers (2007) found that culture is often defined as the shared values that hold organizations together and is seen as a critical element in the management of change because of its resistance to change. The insights gained from this study could be used as the basis for enhancing the leadership with further suggestions and recommendations for future research on student learning and consequently school improvement.

The study will have further implications for the potential that all individuals and groups within schools have for influencing teaching and leadership. Additionally, understandings could be further investigated in other organizational contexts to inform and monitor their overall cultural health.

This study can provide insights into organizational patterns within schools and education systems that are important to school professionals. At the school level, support for instructional and assessment policies may be enhanced with increased understanding of the phenomena that influence the school's professional leadership culture.

Definition of Terms

The major terms employed in this study are defined as follows:

1. **Culture:** Schein (2010) defined culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group in solving problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid by the group" (p. 18). He further identified three basic levels of culture, separated by how easily one can visualize them and their impact on action within an organization: *artifacts, espoused beliefs and values* and *basic underlying* assumptions (Schein, 2010, p. 24).

2. **School culture:** For the purposes of this study, the definition of school culture provided by Kaplan and Owings (2013) stated that school culture may be understood as a historically transmitted cognitive framework of shared but taken-for-granted assumptions, values, norms, and long term beliefs and practices about what organization members think is important.

3. **Artifacts:** Aspects of culture revealed by what one sees, hears and feels when entering an organization (Schein, 2010).

4. **Espoused beliefs and values:** Ideals, goals, aspirations, ideologies, and rationalizations bout the way things are within an organization and what people are supposed to do (Schein, 2010).

5. **Basic assumptions:** Unconscious, taken for granted beliefs and values that determine behaviour, perception, thought, and feeling. (Schein, 2010).

6. **Professional leadership culture**: the shared assumptions, practices, beliefs, and values concerning leadership among professionals that facilitate the professional work of the school.

7. **Teacher**: an educator whose primarily role is the instruction and implementation of a school based course, and the assessment of students.

Assumptions

In this qualitative study, the following assumptions are made:

1. In selecting participants, it was assumed that the criterion of one year's experience was sufficient to enable them to adequaltely reflect upon the professional leadership culture at that school.

2. Participating principals and teachers responded honestly to interview questions.

Delimitations

Certain choices were made by this researcher, which played a part in narrowing the scope and boundaries of the study. Research questions, sources, analyses and synthesis of the data are delimited as follows:

1. The focus of this study was on professional leadership culture within one school (pre-K to eight) and its perceived relationship to student learning.

2. The nature of the professional leadership culture was examined from the perspectives of one administrator and five teachers at one school. The perceptions of other actors such as parents and students were not considered.

3. Data collection was delimited to the time period of primary data collection. This occurred during regular school hours in January and February 2016.

4. This study was delimited to one urban school in one urban public school division.

Limitations

There are some limitations that need to be kept in mind when reading and interpreting the findings of this study. The following limitations apply to this research:

1. Generalizability of findings from this study is limited because it focuses solely upon one school within one school division though the study served to explore the school's leadership and professional culture, and developed findings that can be interpreted and weighed by individuals in other contexts.

2. Findings were limited by participants' ability to recall and describe circumstances and events related to the professional leadership culture of their schools.

3. Results were likely influenced by the varying capacities for self-awareness among participants.

4. Results were influenced by participants' abilities to accurately represent their recollections, perceptions, opinions, and experiences.

Researcher's Background

My personal interest in this topic comes from my continuing curiosity about the nature and effectiveness of leadership in schools. As an educator with over 18 years of experience teaching from grades three to twelve in rural, urban and northern communities, I constantly questioned the extent to which leadership influences student learning. Leadership has been a passion of mine. As an instructor, I had a strong belief that if a teacher could build a classroom culture that positively influenced student

learning, a leader could influence the overall school leadership culture: how it is developed and sustained, and how this leadership culture relates to student learning within the school.

As career and research opportunities open up within the area of creating, marking and evaluating national and provincial assessment for learning exams, developing provincial division wide curricula, constructing division wide math and literacy assessment tools along with division wide rubrics, I was drawn to the importance of leadership to provide insights into improving schools. Now my interest was extended to developing my understanding about the relationship between leadership and learning.

My research orientation is based predominantly on an interpretivist stance (Burrell & Morgan, 1985; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Demers (2007) found that interpretive scholars view organizations as cultures, that is, socially constructed systems of meanings; she affirmed, "Most interpretivists define the concept of culture as dealing essentially with shared symbols and meanings" (p. 81). This idea had a strong influence on my stance as I interpreted the voices of my participants concerning the professional culture of their school.

Demers (2007) argued that managerial leaders conceive culture development more as a natural ongoing structuring process than a periodic intervention. My academic study of educational administration furthered my interest in school culture and how it relates to student learning. I believe that when we observe learning at a school level, we find ways to enlighten administrators, teachers, students, parents, policy makers, and governing bodies to nurture a culture that contributes to the life and health of all its members and the organization as well.

Organization of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized into five chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to the research, the purpose, along with some personal background of the researcher's interest in the study. Chapter two includes a review of the related literature. The search for an understanding of the connection between the nature of the professional leadership culture of one school and its perceived relationship to student learning directed the literature review. Chapter two concludes with a presentation of the framework utilized to guide the study. Chapter three presents the basis for the study's methodology and research design. The study's sample, conceptual model, instrumentation used, data collection processes and data analysis are presented. Chapter four contains the findings of the study for each of the guiding research questions, followed by the identification of the major categories emerging from the data. Chapter five contains the major conclusions arising from the study, a cultural analysis of the school, a discussion of the major findings in light of related literature, and an overview of the implications for policy, theory, practice and further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Due to the rich development of the analysis of culture from multiple perspectives,

the focus of this literature review was an attempt to provide key contributions to the

notion of school culture. To understand the journey leading up to current day practices

and beliefs, this literature review was organized into five sections consisting of first, an

overview of how culture is defined; second, an examination of two main theories of

organizational culture, which attempt to explain how a variety of forces affect the way

cultures develop; third, a discussion of the different cultures that are found within

organizations, the relationship of culture and climate, and the emergence of research on

professional cultures and their impacts upon culture in schools; fourth, research on the

role that leadership plays in shaping strong and healthy school cultures. The chapter

concludes with an overview of the conceptual framework that guides this study.

Culture Defined

Culture is a difficult concept to define. There is little doubt that culture is one of

the two or three most complicated words in the English language (Williams, 1976).

Berger (1995) found that culture is one of the most dominant and elusive concepts used in

ongoing discussion about society and arts. In fact, Berger (1995) noted, "anthropologists

have advanced more than a hundred definitions of culture" (p. 136). Consequently, before

discussing the relationship between the culture of a school and its relationship to student

learning, I will take a closer look at what the literature has to say on school culture.

Ledoux (2005) found that culture could not be broken down into one

characteristic but is based on multiple facets; he stated, "The definition of culture, long

debated, congeals around the concepts of story, history, climate, identity, symbols,

language, rules, feelings, shared values and charisma" (p. 237). Kruse and Seashore Louis (2009) arrived at a similar finding; they suggested that culture is a complex phenomenon. They pointed out that the definition of culture is composed of six distinct overlapping subcultures each characterized by its own preferences, values and expectations. These six subcultures are identified by Kruse and Seahsore Louis (2009) as teacher, school administrator, district, community, parent, and student subcultures. They said, "In schools with substantial overlap, where the culture is mutually understood and accepted, there is less conflict, more participation in decision making and other leadership initiatives and, generally, more agreement on directions and choices" (p. 24). Indeed, Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) asserted a definition within their model that every group or category of people carries a set of common mental programs that establishes its culture. Demers (2007) arrived at a similar conclusion when she noted that culture applies to a group of people.

Schein (2010) suggested that culture is based on shared learning. He defined culture as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of adapting and integrating, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, needs to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to problems (p. 18).

Earlier authors studying culture provided similar definitions. According to Bush (1995), culture refers to the "values, beliefs and norms of individuals in the organization" and is "manifested by symbols and rituals rather than through the formal structure of the organization" (p. 29). Wilson (1971) defined culture as knowledge of "what is and ought to be" (p. 90). Peterson and Deal (1998) characterized culture as the underground stream

of norms, values, beliefs, traditions and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems and confront challenges. This set of informal expectations and values shapes how people think, feel and act. Wagner (2006) formulated a definition of school culture as, "the shared experiences both in school and out of school (traditions and celebrations) that create a sense of community, family, and team membership" (p. 41). This is appropriate in the context of the present study.

Kruse and Seashore Louis (2009) found that a school's culture is influenced by people's choices about who they work with and how they work together, revealed through inquiry into the nature and meanings of artifacts, values and beliefs, sustained by consistent focus on key goals and involving others in achieving them, enhanced by creating external links with others working on similar issues, building effective relationships with the larger organization, and shaped by external relationships that can support professional practice (p. 162). Kruse et al., (2009) noted that culture is defined by 'the ways in which things get done around here'. (p. 3)

Kaplan and Owings (2013) based their definition on past research when they proposed that the definition of school culture as the shared orientations, values, norms and practices hold an educational unit together, give it a distinctive identity and vigorously change from the outside. They stated:

School culture may be understood as a historically transmitted cognitive framework of shared but taken-for-granted assumptions, values, norms, and actions-stable, long term beliefs and practices about what organization members think is important. School culture defines a school's persona. These assumptions, unwritten rules, and unspoken beliefs shape how its members think and do their

jobs. They affect relationships, expectations, and behaviours among teachers, administrators, students, and parents. They give meaning to what people say and mold their interpretation of even the most minor daily events. Everything in the organization is affected by its culture and its particular forms and features. (p. 4)

These authors noted that culture is what the organization's members perceive it to be, not whether the members like or agree with it. Furthermore, they argued that one organization's culture differs from another organization's culture. Simply put, no two schools have the same culture.

Deal and Peterson (2009) elaborated on their earlier work (1998) when they found that other concepts used to capture the deep mythical underpinning of school culture included values, beliefs, assumptions and norms. These scholars saw that each of these were related and that they often overlapped. They remarked that values are not simply goals or expressions but rather values are the conscious expressions of what an organization stands for. Beliefs rest on faith instead of evidence. Beliefs are how one comprehends and deals with the world around us. Assumptions shape our thoughts and actions, as they are the preconscious system of beliefs, values and perceptions that guide behaviour. Norms are informal rules that become behavioural blueprints that people are obliged to follow. An example would be what teachers are expected to wear (jeans versus dress pants). Norms consolidate assumptions, values and beliefs. From their earlier research (Deal and Peterson, 1994), they identified that there exist positive and dysfunctional norms in schools. Bolman and Deal (2003) asserted, "Every group develops informal rules to live by-norms that govern how the group functions and how the members conduct themselves" (p. 175). They observed that employees are hired to

16

do a job but they always bring social and personal needs with them to the workplace. Ultimately, Bolman and Deal (2003) found that the success in any organization depends heavily on the quality of interpersonal relationships, which comes in identifying the positive and negative norms and working to transform the negative, dysfunctional ones into a positive.

More recent scholars Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) summarized that culture has been referred to at different times as the social glue that holds people together, the *way* we do things around here, activity behind the scenes or between the lines, what's *really* going on, the patterns of behaviour that distinguish *us* from *them*, an invisible force-field that limits actions and thoughts, a set of behaviours that seem strange to new employees, deeply embedded beliefs and assumptions, the unwritten rules, software for the mind, a home-court feeling, the default mode of behaviour, covert assimilation (that feels like accommodation), a collective consciousness, shared social reflexes, the box that we try to think outside of, proof that organizations can learn, a code honoured by members and a latent system of authority.

Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) added some examples within their definition of culture. These authors noted that culture is the group's personality, culture provides for a limited way of thinking, culture takes years to evolve, it is based on values and beliefs, culture is part of use, and culture determines whether or not improvement is possible, As Kaplan et al., (2013) stated, "school culture is not merely an abstraction. People can see, hear, touch, and feel an organization's culture in its facilities, art, technology, and human behaviours" (p. 9). Kaplan and Owings (2013) acknowledged that seeing the nature of a school's culture is difficult. What is culture? Ultimately, when formulating one definition

of culture based on the many examples, this author could conclude that culture is some combination of artifacts (also called practices, symbols or forms), values and beliefs, and the underlying assumptions that organizational members share about what is appropriate behaviour.

Locating Culture

Culture can be found everywhere. A significant body of research has focused on culture within the context of schools. Kruse and Seashore Louis (2009) found that culture is characterized by deeply rooted traditions, values and beliefs. They stated, "Culture always will be the creation of its participants in response to each other and outside stimuli" (2009, p. 5). These authors noted that it is often assumed that a school has a singular or dominant culture, which may be true in some cases, especially in smaller schools located in relatively homogeneous communities. However, most schools are characterized by the coexistence of multiple cultures that are accommodate each other but are not the same. Schein (2010) arrived at a similar finding when he noted that culture must be based on the most fundamental characteristic; it is a product of social learning.

Locating culture then requires understanding the concept, as it exists within organizations. Understanding complex organizations, such as schools, requires the use of a good theory. Theories explain, predict and serve as frameworks for making sense of the world around us, theories also help to organize varied forms and sources of information and connect to taking informed action (Corbin et al., 2015; Creswell, 2007). Bolman and Deal's (2003) organizational frames provide one possible vehicle to describe and analyze cultural data because their theory offers four lenses through which organizational behaviour can be understood and analyzed. They suggested the frames of *structural,*

18

human resources, political, and *symbolic* as being broad enough to account for most influence on persons in regard to culture within an organization. According to Bolman and Deal (2003), "Our purpose in this book is to present lenses, or frames that help you understand and find your way around. Frames are windows on the world of leadership and management. A good frame makes it easier to know what you are up against and what you can do about it" (pp. 12-13). An individual's frame of reference is pre-configured by past experiences and these functions like a map and a tool for navigation. The importance is in understanding that every tool has strengths and weakness. The right tool makes a job easier, but the wrong one just gets in the way (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Bolman & Deal's (2003) four frames of organizational theory (structural, human resource, political, and symbolic) provide one conceptual framework for the examination of a culture within an organization. Each of these four frames has its own image of reality. Bolman and Deal found that individuals tend to examine issues and organizations through one predominant mental model or lens (such as school culture), which restricts their ability to see the whole picture and consider the actual complexity of the issues.

When analyzing the culture of an organization, it is important to consider the nature of interaction within the organization. Bolman and Deal argued that no one frame can fully explain or impact desired changes without consideration of the other frames. They added, "Recall, too, that a strong culture tends to increase homogeneity and reduce pluralism. A unifying culture reduces conflict and political strife-or makes them easier to manage" (2003, p. 315). When taken as a whole, their comprehensive framework offers a possibility of situating culture within an organization.

From a cultural perspective, Schein (2010) defined culture as:

The culture of a group can now be defined as a pattern of shared basic

assumptions learned by a group as it solved it problems of external adaptation and

internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and,

therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and

feel in relation to those problems. (p. 18)

He further identified three basic levels of culture separated by how easily one can

visualize them and their impact on action within an organization. These three levels are

artifacts, espoused beliefs and values and *basic underlying assumptions.*

Schein added that artifacts are revealed by what one sees, hears and feels when

entering an organization. Artifacts are the visible manifestations of an organization such

as its language, its technology and products, its artistic creations and its style, as

embodied in clothing, and manners of address, to name just a few. Kaplan et al. (2013)

noted that at the first level, artifacts such as school colors, mascots, or slogans-can be

seen and touched. At this level, artifacts, Kruse et al. (2009) found that a school's

artifacts are intended to communicate both to those inside the school and to visitors what

the school believes itself to be. They are important, but people may not see them for what

they are which are collective expressions of values and expected patterns of behaviour.

Thus, artifacts are easy to apprehend but difficult to interpret without knowledge of the

two deeper levels.

Espoused beliefs and values are statements that members make about the way

things are within an organization and what people are supposed to do. They represent the

'shoulds' and 'oughts' of organizational culture. As Kaplan et al. (2013) noted, values are

ideas of what is desirable. They mention examples such as openness, trust, cooperation,

teamwork, continuous improvement to name just a few. Furthermore, like artifacts, they are often taken for granted; yet they provide strong guidelines for how to act. Kruse et al. (2009) observed that although more important than artifacts, values still leave large areas of behaviour unexplained, leaving us with a feeling that we understand only a piece of the culture

The third level within organizations is characterized by deeply embedded basic assumptions, which are difficult, if not impossible to communicate. Within this third level, culture is a set of basic assumptions that are developed on such practices such as what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally, to what is happening and what actions to take in various kinds of situations. These assumptions are taken for granted and they provide strong communal guidelines as they tell us who we are, how to behave towards each other and how to feel good about ourselves. Some examples provided by Kaplan et al. (2013) mention the nature of human activity, the nature of human relationships and others. A school example provided by Kruse et al. (2009) is staff meetings in which some common assumptions are developed on such practices as common areas as how long they should last, who should talk first or last and what topics are out of bounds.

Finally, Kaplan and Owings (2013), as well as Kruse and Seashore Louis (2009), indicated that locating a school's culture is difficult. Kruse et al. (2009) pointed out that the difficulty relates to how a school's culture is like an iceberg, where most of what is important is submerged. What one sees is not always what is important and it is the less visible parts of a school's culture that can sink any efforts aimed at change.

Diagnosing the Culture

A variety of forces affect the way cultures develop in organizations. Kaplan et al. (2013) found that organizational learning begins with school culture. In order to diagnose what influences a school's culture, one requirement is to examine the multiple levels at which culture is established in organizations. Kruse and Seashore Louis (2009) emphasized that diagnosing a culture is a repeated cyclical process of gathering, analyzing, and reflecting on information that involves multiple passes, but usually with a different group of people and a deepening understanding.

Relationship of Culture and Climate

If culture is a school's personality, climate is its attitude. The difference between the two is that attitude is far easier change than a personality (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015). According to Tubbs and Garner (2008), the climate would be the average characteristics of the individuals in the school, such as teachers' morale, staff stability, and students' background. Hattie (2009) meta-analysis found that the most powerful effects of the school relate to features within schools such as climate. Schein (2010) described climate as the feeling that is conveyed in a group by the physical layout and the way in which members of the organization interact with each other, with customers and other outsiders. Based on these descriptions, it would appear that a school's climate is a window into its culture. Climate is a part of culture.

Mitchell and Sackney (2011) argued that certain conditions are needed to be a part of the school culture: the affective climate and the cognitive climate. According to this group, two aspects of the growth-promoting affecting climate are valuing the contributions of colleagues (affirmation) and involving them as participants (invitation).

22

Their description of the first element, affirmation is one that implies respect but not necessarily agreement; they stated, "People can disagree radically on a host of issues, but affirmation means that, even in the face of deep disagreement, they acknowledge the value of others' opinions, ideas or contributions" (2011, p. 55). Mitchell and Sackney (2011) noted that from a participant's reflections, that as a teacher, you need to feel that you can speak and will be heard, and that you are respected and that what you say is valued. This means that the person does not have to agree with you, but what is important is that they value what you say. Mitchell et al. (2011) found that in their observations of schools, teachers whose ideas are not affirmed tend not to be active participants in the life of the school.

Mitchell et al. (2011) identified that the second element of the affective climate is invitation, where individuals are explicitly asked to participate. They found that teachers, students and parents would more readily join others when they are invited, when colleagues make sincere efforts to draw them into discussions or into collaborative practices. They noted that various research findings signify that trust is a critical factor in bringing profound improvement to a school; they asserted, "Without trust, a true sense of community cannot be developed; nor can a collaborative culture exist" (Mitchell et al., 2011, p. 59). They remarked that when distrust pervades a school culture, it is unlikely that the school will be an energetic, motivating place. Rather, a culture of self-preservation and isolation is likely to exist. According to Mitchell and Sackney (2011), the affective climate deals specifically with the development of human relationships, for it is in the community that people feel connected, value others and are valued by others.

Building the cognitive climate based on Mitchell and Sackney (2011) can only occur once the affective climate is in place. They observed that just as one cannot assume the existence of a healthy affective climate, one could not assume the existence of a healthy cognitive climate. These authors found that the cognitive climate is constructed through professional conversation, which entails in-depth discussions amongst educators about specific professional issues, problems, concerns, perplexities and mysteries. What this type of climate means for educators is that ideas about learning, teaching, students, curriculum and assessment have to be negotiated with other members of the community such as colleagues, administrators, students, parents and other interested parties. The cognitive climate relies on collective reflection and professional conversation to develop shared understandings and values.

Mitchell et al. (2011) found that affective and cognitive conditions generate a culture based on an interpersonal environment that either supports or limits professional learning. They formulated that a reciprocal relationship exists between the affective processes as the heart of the learning community and the cognitive processes as the mind. These authors concluded that the affective features provide the foundation upon which the cognitive climate rests.

Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) listed some differences between climate and culture. These authors noted that climate is the group's attitude, climate differs throughout the week and months, climate creates a state of mind, climate is based on perceptions, climate can be felt when you enter a room, climate is the way that the staff feel around the school and climate is the first thing that improves when positive change is made. Tubbs and Garner (2008) affirmed that the research on school climate could affect

many areas and people within schools. They point to previous studies, which have found that school climate is able to exert significant influence over school performance. One such study, MacNeil, Prater, and Busch (2009) asserted, "Improvements in student achievement will happen in schools with positive and professional cultures that reflect a positive climate" (p. 77). Simply put, if you want to influence a culture, visit other more effective schools and make note of the climate.

Climate influences culture as it reveals what a particular culture values (Gruenert et al., 2015). Consider the following example of climate influencing culture. Many teachers detest student assemblies and they see them to be a waste of time. When a critical mass of teachers at a school adopts such a negative attitude, a climate of apathy is bound to take hold during assemblies. The overarching culture may then use this apathy to possibly discredit the people who set up and run the assemblies, or perhaps to suggest that other school functions, which form part of the culture, are a waste of time as well. This might suggest that that climate has influenced the culture and that the school culture is dysfunctional. Whether for good or for ill, the school climate will reflect a change in attitude and moral, which can itself only occur if the culture allows it.

Emergence and Role of Professional Cultures

DuFour and Burnette (2002) posed the question: will we make a conscious effort to shape our culture? Stoll (2011) noted that ensuring all children's and young people's learning experiences and outcomes are of high quality, which she referred to as, *raising the bar* and *closing the gap*, is a major challenge for leaders, teachers, and others supporting learning themselves. Stoll (2011) found that these adults need the capacity to take charge of change and learn continuously themselves; she stated, "Creating and

developing capacity is therefore an imperative for anyone passionate about improving and transforming learning" (p. 103). What does this have to do with the role of professional cultures? Stoll (2011) pointed to research that suggested that such communities may hold a critical key to capacity building. She noted that rather than focusing on superficial quick fixes of change, professional learning communities appear to generate and support sustainable improvements because they build the capacity that helps keeps schools improving.

Professional learning communities is a concept where the focus is on the administrators, teachers and professional staff within the educational setting and defined by Leithwood, Aitken and Jantzi (2006) as "a group of people with many common work-related values and goals engaged in continuous efforts to increase their individual and collective abilities that foster student learning" (p. 26). Stoll (2011) found that developing professional learning communities creates the culture within which powerful teacher professional learning can take place.

Mitchell and Sackney (2011) endorsed the notion of learning communities; they stated, "In this way, learning and meaning-making happen all the time, as people construct their knowledge bases through dialogue with belief systems, information, experiences, and one another" (pp. 10-11). According to these authors, learning communities are characterized by three common characteristics; first, learning communities are characterized by shared vision, values and goals. Secondly, learning communities are built around a collaborative work culture. Third, educators in learning communities engage in willingly in reflective practice and experimentation. They stated, "Within a learning community, the learning of the teachers is as important as the learning

of children" (2001, p. 2). Mitchell et al. (2011) argued, "Finally in order for learning communities to flourish, a culture of high trust and mutual respect has to exist. Without trust and respect, people divert their energy into self-protection and away from learning" (p. 11). Their view is one based on the belief that there is a relationship between increased student learning teacher collaboration, and professional development.

Kruse et al., (2009) referred to a similar concept in their research, which they entitled PCOLT, which stands for *Professional Community Organizational Learning* and *Trust.* They contended that the latter is composed of the core professional community which is clearly dominated by the staff, the organizational learning involving greater participation by the students, the district office and community members. They envisioned PCOLT to a spider's web of networking where leadership is intertwined amongst multiple groups of support. They argued that the crucial element needed is trust and engagement of all partners. From their perspective, creating good school cultures must be concerned less with rearranging the formal structures found in schools. Instead, decisions about who should be at the table when ideas are being discussed and debated are of far more importance.

In a study conducted by Seashore Louis and Wahlstrom (2011), the researchers reiterated that the common thread running through the development of any framework or plan focusing on improving school culture and student learning is focused on four key areas: supporting individuals and groups to identify and preserve what is valuable to them: guiding the school to chip away at cultural features that inhibit change: helping members to understand the forces and conditions that will shape their future: and,

consistently checking to make sure that the aspirations for change are understood and that they result in observable new behaviours.

<center>**The Role of Leadership in Shaping School Culture**</center>

Numerous researchers have provided insights into the relationship between leadership and culture in the context of schools. Glickman et al., (2014) identified twelve norms that need to be present in school cultures of continuous improvement. They include: distributed, supportive leadership, professional dialogue, trust and confidence, critique, reflective inquiry, productive conflict, unity of purpose, incremental approach, professional development, collegiality and collaboration, experimentation and risk taking and lastly, recognition, sharing and celebration. As seen in previous studies, this framework encompasses many of the elements discussed previously. This would seem to indicate that the success of leaders in influencing culture depends on how these norms are established and practiced on a daily basis.

Firestone and Seashore Louis (1999) have identified that administrators can manage culture within ways that influence both adult and student cultures. This belief was collaborated in a later study (Hattie, 2009; Seashore Louis et al., 2011) when they found that the culture affects how adults behave in the hallways, in monitoring the lunchrooms, and when greeting students as they walk in the door. Seashore Louis et al., (2011) affirmed that all of these changes in culture lead to affect the student culture. This in turns leads to higher levels of student learning, while also contributing to higher levels of satisfaction amongst the staff.

Talbert (2009) stated, "School systems are complex, multilevel organizations in which units of people within them have different responsibilities and roles, different

<center>28</center>

levels and kinds of authority, different histories in the organization and in education, different knowledge and different views of the problem of improving student learning" (p. 569). DuFour and Fullan (2013) noted that changing the shape of culture requires altering long held assumptions, beliefs, expectations, and habits that represent the norm for people in organizations. They concluded that it is these deeply held but largely unexamined assumptions that help people to make sense of the world.

Leading Collaboration

What influences culture? How can something change the very nature of culture? Talbert (2009) noted that in response to the current high-stakes testing and accountability movement, new kinds of collaborative inquiry among teachers have emerged. These varied reform initiatives have taken the shape of communities of practice, collaborative study groups and critical friend groups.

O'Neil and Conzemius (2002) found that schools showing continuous improvement in student results are those whose cultures are reflected in four key aspects: a shared focus, reflective practices, collaboration and partnerships and an ever increasing leadership capacity. Focus is achieved when everyone shares goals, which are focused on student learning. Reflection is achieved by analyzing data (test scores, parent, student and teacher satisfaction measures) as these all allow the staff to know what to focus on. This demonstrates a strong culture of reflective practice.

Collaboration has been identified as a crucial component of influencing a culture. DuFour (2004b) defined collaboration as a systematic process in which people work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve individual or collective results.

DuFour and Eaker (1998) endorsed the concept of collaboration on the part of teachers as the single most important factor to ensure student learning in schools. According to these authors, they have found that creating teams of teachers is one of the most effective ways to promote collaboration, but they stress that four prerequisites must occur before teams are organized: Firstly, time for collaboration must be entrenched within the school day, week and year. DuFour and Eaker (1998) argued that collaboration by invitation only is ineffective. They suggested that meaningful opportunities for collaboration must be embedded into the daily life of the school in order for collaborative cultures to take root. Secondly, the purposes of collaboration must be made clear to all participants. Thirdly, participants must have opportunities for training and support in their efforts to learn about and become effective collaborators. Lastly, educators should acknowledge and accept both their individual and collective responsibilities for working together as professional colleagues.

Kaplan et al. (2013) also emphasized the importance of building collaborative professional communities as means to improve student learning for every individual throughout their educational journey. They found that when the school culture encourages people to interact in cooperative rather than competitive ways and grow strong professional communities, teachers maintain greater trust in their leaders and school.

Perhaps the most important change of roles for any leader, as Mitchell and Sackney (2011) acknowledged, is one that brings others together and allows everyone to contribute. They added that ultimately, any adoption of a model designed at shaping culture should be one where teachers are able to observe district and school leaders

learning and participating with them side by side, instead of telling them what to do. The main emphasis should be on the professional interaction and collaboration. As Kruse and Seashore Louis (2009) observed, the development of alliances is critical in order for poor and inconsistent practices within and across schools to change.

Cook and Friend, (1991) stated, "collaboration requires that professionals trust one another enough to undertake a collaborative activity. If they continue to work together, their trust typically grows" (p. 51). DuFour and Fullan (2013) acknowledged the importance of collaboration and the importance of setting time aside for this to occur. They observed that there is a growing sense of urgency about the need for education reform and this in turn makes people vulnerable to looking for quick fixes.

Fullan (2005) discussed the notion of collaboration as opposed to competition being the new motivation for many of today's schools. He explained that people learn best from their peers and those networks can strengthen knowledge and focus. Buffum, Mattos and Weber (2009) found that collaborative educators do not view experimentation in the form of trying new things together as a singular task to be accomplished later; rather they view experimentation as how we do things every day. Buffum et al., asserted, "This collaborative learning enables team members to develop new skills to better meet the learning needs of their students" (2009, p. 53). Fullan (2005) argued that if true professional collaboration is to take place, we must look at how we can build trusting, respectful relationships amongst all the educational members.

DuFour and Burnette (2002) observed that collaboration doesn't occur simply by putting together teams of people. Collaboration requires skill development over time and coaching. It also requires structures that encourage and invite shared work around

common goals. Leadership capacity grows when individuals focus on student learning, reflect on student assessments and learn as a collaborative team.

Leading Culture Change

In their 1996 review Hallinger and Heck (1996) noted that where principal leadership can be hypothesized to shape the school's culture (e.g. by promoting collaboration) it is also theoretically possible to suggest that a principal's leadership is simultaneously shaped by the features of the school's culture (e.g. teacher's resistance to change) (p. 30).

There is a significant body of literature pointing to the influence of leadership on culture and change. According to Kaplan et al. (2013), "The dynamic activity of culture creating and aligning followers' efforts is the essence of leadership" (p. 3). Schein (1997) affirmed that the leader of an organization is the primary source of influence on organizations and those leaders create and manage culture through organizations. Schein acknowledged that the heart of leadership is culture creation (Kaplan et al., 2013). Kaplan et al. (2013) stated, "Leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin" (p. 38). These authors found that according to Schein the ability to perceive the limitations of one's culture and to evolve the culture adaptively are the essence and ultimate challenge of leadership.

In the context of schools, numerous researchers have pointed to the importance of school leaders recognizing that schools, as organizations, are no different from any other in regard to the formation of their culture. School leaders from every level can create, and are a key, to shaping school culture (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Engels, Hotton, Devos, Bouckenooghe & Aelterman, 2008; Dufour & Burnette, 2002; DuFour, 2004 Firestone &

32

Seashore Louis, 1999; Fullan, 2001; Kaplan & Owens, 2013; Kruse & Seashore Louis, 2009; MacNeil et al., 2009; Peterson & Deal, 1998; Samuels, 2010; Seashore Louis et al., 2011; Tubbs et al., 2008; White et al., 2003).

Another view of school cultures is their nature as *healthy* or *toxic* (Kaplan et al., 2013). Healthy cultures are a reflection of a strong leadership that supports the organization. Kaplan et al. (2013) found that in healthy cultures, members share a consistent sense of purpose and values. Administrators, teachers, students and parents endorse norms of continuous learning and school improvement. All members feel a sense of responsibility for student learning. In toxic or unhealthy cultures, the opposite occurs. Kruse et al. (2009) found that most districts do not have a toxic culture. They argued that most districts like schools have cultures where well-meaning, hard-working people would like to do things to be better. The problem according to these authors is that these people often lack the skills to know how or the have depth of relationships that can help build broad support for change.

Muhammad (2009) conducted a study on transforming school culture, which involved 34 schools – 11 elementary, 14 middle and 9 high schools from around the United States. He found that school culture is created via the interaction of social, economic, parental and political forces with the experiences and worldviews of educators and students. His research suggested that how educators (teachers, counsellors, administrators and support staff) interacted in the school culture was in part based on how they articulated their beliefs as demonstrated by their behaviour.

Muhammad's investigation of school culture revealed the existence of conflicting belief systems involving four groups: the believers, the tweeners, the survivors and the

33

fundamentalists. He stated, "Each of these groups had distinct characteristics and weapons (behaviours and tools) that they used to exercise their will" (p. 29). According to Muhammad (2009), the first group, the believers are the educators who believe in academic success for each student. This group believes in the core values that make up a healthy school culture. The second group, the tweeners are the educators who are new to a school culture. They are the observers and as such they spend their time trying to learn the norms and expectations of the school's culture. The third group are identified as the survivors who are the small group of teachers who are so overwhelmed by the demands of the profession that they suffer from depression and merely survive from one day to the next day. Lastly, the fundamentalists are the staff members who are not only opposed to change but organize to resist and thwart any change initiative. Muhammad (2009) found, "These four groups and their characteristics have a divisive impact on the school culture" (p. 29). He noted that in order for leaders to transform a school from a toxic to healthy learning environment, it is essential to understand and influence change within the groups that exist in the school.

In considering the literature that deals with leading culture change – instead of searching for a model or a recipe that one can follow in the hopes of creating a strong and positive (healthy) culture, perhaps a better approach would be to look at the concept of leadership as a whole. So the question now becomes how can leadership influence culture?

In their report on the world's best school system, Barber and Mourshed (2007) emphasized the importance of effective leadership when they asserted, "We did not find a single school system which had been turned around that did not possess sustained,

committed, and talented leadership" (p. 38). This would seem to indicate the importance of building a relationship-based shared leadership.

School leaders in effective schools have been found to attend to the learning and development of students, teachers, and their general staff. Drago-Severson (2007) noted, "A person's way of knowing shapes how he understands his role and responsibilities as a teacher, leader, and learner, and how he thinks about what makes a good teacher and what constitutes a good leader" (p. 79). It is evident that in education this involves making connections.

Reeves (2006) found that effective school leaders are architects who know that is essential to include bus drivers and cafeteria workers in professional development sessions, "because the school day for any students begins on the bus or at breakfast, not in the classroom" (p. 29). He added that the school cannot be divided between those who are held accountable and those who are not. Ultimately, principals must now assume the role where they can cultivate a professional leadership culture in schools based on the premise that every certified and noncertified staff member supports a common focus on improving teaching and learning.

There are many definitions that try to collectively encompass leadership as a broad and complex concept. Leadership has been labeled as shared, site-based, servant, intensified, transformational, distributive, transactional, authentic, ethical, instructional, moral, managerial and so forth (Foster, 1989; Fullan, 2001; Glatter, 2009; Hattie, 2009; Kruse & Seashore Louis, 2009; Sample, 2010; Shields, 2004; Walker, 2011). What does it mean to be a leader? How does one become a leader? What qualities exemplify good leadership? These are important questions to consider as there are many strengths and

weaknesses associated with each of the leadership styles mentioned above. Nonetheless, numerous researchers (Deal & Peterson, 2009; DuFour & Fullan, 2013; Kaplan & Owings, 2013; Kruse & Seashore Louis, 2009; Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Mitchell & Sackney, 2011; Reeves, 2006) concluded, leadership exceeds the capacity of any one person to meet all the needs at hand.

Deal and Peterson (2009) concluded that strong cultures produce *dense leadership* where every member becomes a champion, visionary and poet. As administrators, teachers, parents, students and the community work together, the school becomes more than a building with instructional materials. It becomes an institution with a history, values, purpose, pride, stories and beliefs. Kruse and Seashore Louis (2009) agreed when they found that the main denominator of a successful culture change between them and more "usual" schools is that they have exceptionally permeable boundaries: principals, students, teachers and community members work seamlessly to help students. These authors asserted, "Culture change requires sustained effort, over a period of years, that is broadly distributed throughout a school and that centers on the combination of values and behaviours that allow teachers and administrators to make good choices during the very busy workdays that they always encounter" (p. 14). DuFour and Fullan (2013) acknowledged that a difficulty of cultural change comes from understanding that unless leaders recognize the need for whole system reform aimed at changing the very nature of the system, schools will be unable to meet the challenges they face. In the end, when an organization has a clear understanding of its purpose, why it exists and what it must do and whom it should serve the culture will ensure that things works well.

Changing Perspectives on Leadership

Views on leadership have moved over time from a 'top-down' approach to one in which it is shared. Doyle (2004) declared, "Leadership is no longer a process in which administrators lead from the apex of a hierarchical pyramid. Instead, they become part of a web of interpersonal relationships" (p. 197). Presently, principals require a multitude of skills and abilities in order to be an effective leader. Doyle (2004) stated,

> They need to know how to use group strategies, including brainstorming, problem solving, consensus building, and conflict resolution. This shift is often difficult because many current administrators have used bureaucratic leadership throughout their often-lengthy careers. Now, they have to reject past practices and adjust their leadership behaviours and strategies in ways that may seem foreign to many of them. (p. 198)

Doyle (2004) noted that successful leaders are the ones that can make the transition to utilizing more of a collaborative approach in regard to decision making.

Deal and Peterson remarked, "Leadership is at its best is shared, with everyone pulling together in a common direction" (2009, p. 199). Seashore Louis and Wahlstrom established similar conclusions with their observation, "Schools need to build strong cultures in which many tasks of transforming schools requires many leaders" (2011, p. 52). Kaplan et al. (2013) affirmed, "school improvement changes are better accepted, used, and sustained as compared with schools without shared leadership" (p. 131). DuFour and Fullan (2013) concluded that a strong leadership team or a guiding coalition with shared objectives is essential in the early stages of any organization's improvement process. Bolman and Deal (2003) asserted, "One task of leadership is to help groups

37

develop a shared sense of direction and commitment" (p. 178). It would appear logical that tapping into the strengths of many will increase the possibility of influencing change within a culture.

Shared or distributed leadership is based on trust due to the fact that no single teacher possesses all the knowledge, skills, or talent. Harris and Chapman (2002) found that distributive leadership does not start not from the basis of power and control. Instead it comes from the ability to act with others and to enable others to act. They added that distributive leadership places importance upon allowing and empowering those who are not in positions of responsibility or authority to lead.

Doyle (2004) pointed out that, "New thinking about leadership helps schools develop communities of learners where everyone puts aside hierarchical ideas and adapts to roles that foster collaboration and shared decision making" (p. 198). Kruse and Seashore Louis (2009) coined the term *intensified leadership*, which combines both the descriptive and prescriptive perspective of leadership and unavoidably includes elements of shared and servant leadership. They noted that this leadership style is based on the belief that there is no longer a single leader or even a small leadership team. They found that leadership is enhanced by the interaction and networking of many organizational members to include teachers, parents, and the wider community. Bolman and Deal (2003) pointed out that, "Leadership whether shared or individual, plays a critical role in group effectiveness and individual satisfaction" (p. 179). Intensified leadership proposes that members work together to address the teaching and learning needs of the school by adopting and employing shared, communally goals which are based on collective values and beliefs while utilizing mutually understood methods of problem finding and

38

resolution. Kruse et al. (2009) argued that, by incorporating this leadership style, schools have the potential to meet the challenges they face.

Walker (2011) found that leadership begins as a reciprocal arrangement between the leaders and those who follow. Simply put, if a follower loses confidence in the leader or decides for whatever reason not to follow the leader then there is no leadership. Walker added, "I am saying that the studies over the years indicate – the nature of the relationship between leader and constituents – is at the center of what defines leader, follower and leadership" (pp. 12-13). Certainly leadership exists in the relationships between the leader and followers. Glatter (2009) asserted, "therefore, a key requirement for leaders is to create and sustain a climate that is conducive to learning, both in the way that work is allocated and organized and also in the quality of the interpersonal relationships fostered" (p. 234).

Burns (as cited in Foster, 1989) found that leadership could be labeled transactional or transformational. Foster (1989) believed that *transactional* leadership is based on exchange relationships between the leader and the follower (p. 41). Burns saw *transformational* leadership in terms of real leadership where an individual creates a new vision and tries to communicate this new vision to followers. Firestone and Seashore Louis (1999), from a study of Canadian high schools, indicated that the most important transformational leadership behaviours are creating a vision, setting high expectations for performance, creating consensus around group goals, and developing an intellectual stimulating climate (p. 315). Shields (2004) found similarities with Firestone and Seashore Louis in that transformative leadership is based in moral and ethical values. Shields added, "Educators must become transformative leaders, develop positive relationships with students such that children may bring their own lived experiences into the school and

39

classroom, and facilitate moral dialogue" (2004, p. 113). Walker (2011) also found that transformational leaders base their approach to leadership via the building of relationships; and that, transformational leaders know that relationships unlock and release support for projects, ensuring that when they win, everyone wins.

Kaplan et al. (2013) noted that principals can become transformational leaders when they educate teachers about the school and its issues, to help them challenge familiar assumptions that may block problem solving, to ask teachers for their best ideas, and to make full use of the school's human capital to advance student outcomes. As these authors remarked, "Principals must remember, however, that becoming a transformational leader takes time and experience to mature. It does not appear all at once" (p. 42). Nonetheless, Firestone and Seashore Louis (1999) found that transformational leadership changes the school culture, often dramatically so it supports high performance. In effect, transformational leadership could best be summarized as not something that someone does to people but rather it is a way of behaving towards people and working with them on a common goal.

It seems apparent from the literature on leadership mentioned within this section that a shared leadership approach aimed at improving a culture is a valued perspective, particularly in the context of schools. Fullan (2001) contended that the concept of instructional leadership is too limited to sustain school improvement. He promoted the idea that school principals serve as change agents to transform the teaching and learning culture of the school. DuFour (2004) acknowledged that leaders shape the norms of behaviour and therefore the culture. When principals work with staff to build processes to monitor each student's learning and to develop systems of intervention that gives students

additional time and support when they experience difficulty, they create the structures that support the concept of learning for all.

Research on the Student Learning-Leadership Connection

It has been established earlier in this review that leadership plays a significant role in the establishment of effective school culture. The culture of the school is a critical element of effective leadership, and there is increasing evidence from both private and public organizations that organizations with stronger cultures are more adaptable, have higher motivation and commitment amongst members, are more cooperative and better able to resolve conflicts, have greater capacity for innovation and are more effective in achieving their goals (Deal & Peterson, 2009; DuFour & Burnette, 2002; DuFour & Fullan, 2013; Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Gruenert, 2005; Kaplan & Owings, 2013; Kruse & Seashore Louis, 2009; Mitchell & Willower, 1992; O'Neill & Conzemius, 2002; Peterson, 1997; Peterson & Deal, 1998; Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; White, Martin & Johnson, 2003). In this section, I turn my attention to the connection between leadership and learning.

Large Scale Studies on Leadership for Learning

Samuels (2010) noted that a large study conducted by the Wallace Foundation, which focused on the connection between effective leadership and student learning attempted to identify just what types of leadership would make the most difference in school improvement. Samuels (2010) summarized from the data that high student learning is linked to collective leadership, which is the combined influence of educators, parents and others on school decisions. Seashore Louis and Wahlstrom (2011) used the

41

term *shared leadership* to describe the collective leadership necessary in changing a school's culture.

Marzano (2003) completed a review involving 35 years of research looking at what works in schools. He organized his findings into three broad categories: school level factors, teacher level factors, and student level factors. From the research that he completed, Marzano reported that leadership has a critical role in effective school reform; he stated, "Leadership is a necessary condition for effective reform relative to the school-level, the teacher-level, and the student-level factors" (p. 172). Marzano pointed to research that indicated that leadership has a strong influence on student achievement. He found that some examples of leadership at the school level would include: guaranteed and viable curriculum, challenging goals and effective feedback, parent and community involvement, safe and orderly environment, and staff collegiality and professionalism. At the teacher level, Marzano (2003) listed instructional strategies, classroom management, and classroom curriculum design. At the student level, he noted: home atmosphere, learned intelligence and background knowledge and motivation.

Kaplan et al. (2013) found that three decades of school effectiveness research, which included a major review by Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson and Wahlstrom (2004) for the Wallace Foundation, concluded that successful schools have dynamic knowledgeable and focused principals. Kaplan et al. reported that, "Principal leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that influence student academic achievement" (2013, p. 44). MacNeil et al. (2009) found that school principals who choose to lead rather than just manage must first understand the school's culture.

Though the aforementioned authors present an attractive view on the benefits of leadership and culture in school improvement and student learning, several writers warn that such results are not so easy to obtain. Mitchell et al. (2011) reported that a culture of continuous improvement seldom exists. They observed that in most schools, people continue to do what they have been doing and they continue to get what they have been getting. They added that the embedded practices within the culture have worked against school improvement and that leadership actions have not addressed or challenged them.

Timperley and Robertson (2011) found that unless leadership influenced what was happening in the instructional core, it was unlikely to have an impact for students. Timperley et al. (2011) noted that a meta-analysis conducted by Robinson, Hohepa, and Lloyd in 2009 reported that the dimensions with the greatest impact on student outcomes included: establishing goals and expectations; resourcing strategically; promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment (p. 7). Timperley et al. (2011) identified three themes of empowering relationships, patterns of leadership, distribution, and leadership for the improvement of teaching and learning all come together to provide a strong base for understanding what it takes to create the conditions for successful learning for adults and students.

Hallinger (2011) completed a review of 40 years of empirical research with the goal of illustrating the evolution of research findings on school leadership, which contributed to learning and school improvement. In his review, he found that the field has made substantial progress over the past 40 years in identifying ways in which leadership contributes to learning and school improvement. Hallinger (2011) noted four specific dimensions of leading for learning: values and beliefs, leadership focus, contexts for

leadership, and sharing leadership. He found that the ability to express a learning-focused vision that is shared by others and to set clear goals creates a base for all other leadership strategies and actions. Hallinger characterized that, "The principal's vision and goals should be linked to core values of the school's leadership team and the school community in a broader sense. Visions written down on paper only come to life through the routines and actions that are enacted on a daily basis" (p. 137). Hallinger observed the important connection between leadership and the goal of improving student learning when he noted, "The connection between leadership for learning is not the dramatic flourish or grand announcement of a new innovation. Rather, it is the persistent focus on improving the conditions for learning and creating coherence in values and actions across classrooms day in and day out in the school. Hallinger (2011) concluded two important things from his review that play a part in connecting leadership and learning: one, that the principal is important, but she or he can only achieve success through the cooperation of others and second, leadership should be aimed at building capacity for school improvement.

Leadership as an Indirect Influence

There is a widespread agreement among leadership researchers that much of the influence of school leadership is indirect (Hattie, 2009; Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood, Patten & Jantzi, 2010; Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Fairman and Mackenzie (2012) reported that, "While administrators certainly have an important role to play in supporting and encouraging change in school culture, their findings suggested that teachers themselves may be best situated and are intrinsically motivated to lead this work" (p. 243). Fairman et al. (2012) concluded that the work of teacher leaders results in teacher learning as well as improved student learning.

Guskey and Sparks (2002) found that administrators typically do not *directly* influence student learning. Instead, their knowledge and practices indirectly influence students through the development of school policies within a school plan focused on establishing elements of the school's community and culture. Further research by Robinson and Timperley (2007) arrived at the assertion that teachers have the greatest influence on student learning. Robinson et al. (2007) found that a student outcome focus has implications for how we have framed leadership and it is well established that it is teachers who have the greatest direct influence on student learning. These studies suggested that principals do not directly influence learning. This would in turn suggest that the professional leadership culture plays a larger part as it relates to student improvement.

Noteworthy in the context of the present study is Marzano's (2003) observation that a common misconception about effective leadership at the school level is that it should reside with a single individual, namely the principal. Marzano stated, "Although it is certainly true that strong leadership from the principal can be a powerful force toward school reform, the notion that an individual can effect change by sheer will and personality is simply not supported by the research" (2003, pp. 174-175). Marzano (2003) pointed to the evidence from the research that supported the assertion that a substantive change must be supported by administrators and teachers.

Southworth (2011) proposed the concept that effective school leaders work directly on their indirect influence by using three strategies and processes: modeling, monitoring, and dialogue. He found that without leaders and colleagues acting as mentors or coaches to facilitate our learning we may learn little from our work.

Core Leadership Practices

Southworth (2011) noted that connection between leadership and learning comes from the realization that leadership of learning must be shared. Southworth added that support is needed to ensure leaders have the resources at hand to lead teaching and learning. He concluded that how leadership and learning are connected and what school improvement looks like is by senior leaders strategically organizing the distribution of leadership to middle leaders. Southworth observed that it is through this distribution of leadership to others that connections between leadership and learning occur. He found that it is through their excellence as teachers and their skills as leaders that they lead by example in such ways as: monitoring pedagogy, learning and the development of colleagues, and through coaching, mentoring and focused dialogue. Southworth (2011) found that these actions helped to spread the best practice within their schools to their colleagues and draw in excellent practice from other places.

Southworth (2011) argued that leadership should be strongly focused on learning and teaching particularly in regard to pedagogy. Southworth stated, "Connecting leadership and learning is easy: school leadership has to be strongly focused on learning. Learning is the core business of schools and therefore it is primary focus of school leaders" (2011, p. 71). Southworth acknowledged that leaders rely on others because teachers and other members of the staff mediate their ideas.

From his research, Leithwood (2011) synthesized two important questions around leadership and learning in regard to what works and how it works; he asked, "This question is about how successful leadership improves student learning and what it is that successful leaders do to accomplish that goal" (p. 41). Leithwood noted that these are two

of the most crucial issues that are now facing leaders in their attempts to achieve their reform goals.

Leithwood (2011) found that leadership (as discussed in the previous section) is about the exercise of influence and about the effects of such influence on student learning are mostly indirect. He proposed a model that contains four core leadership practices or paths: *Rational, Emotions Organization and Family.* Leithwood noted that the influence of these four successful leadership practices flow in order to support student learning. He further clarified his model by indicating that there are variables on each of these paths and that variables interact with variables on other paths. Leithwood (2011) observed that selecting the most promising of these variables and improving their status or condition are among the most central challenges facing leaders intending to improve learning in their schools (p. 42). Leithwood stressed the importance of recognizing the interaction of these leadership practices; he declared, "Typically, failure to take such interaction into account severely limits school leaders' influence" (2011, p. 44). A warning from Leithwood (2011) reinforces the notion that much of the success of school leaders in building school organizations which make significantly greater than expected contributions to student learning depends on how well these leaders interact with the specific social and organizational contexts in which they find themselves.

A study conducted by Leithwood (2011) looked at connecting principal and teacher voices to core leadership practices. His study involved a sample of 12 principals, and 63 teachers located in 12 elementary, middle and secondary schools working with students from similar mid to low socio-economic family backgrounds. Leithwood (2011) reported that the initial selection of the 12 schools involved in the study was based on the

quality of the teachers' instructional practices, which were assessed during classroom observations. Six of the 12 schools involved in his study were designated high scoring schools based in these previous ratings of classroom instruction. The other six schools were designated low scoring schools. From his study, Leithwood (2011) identified four core successful leadership practices: *Setting directions, Developing people, Redesigning the organization,* and *Managing the instructional programme* that were perceived to have an effect for leaders in influencing student learning.

Within this study, Leithwood (2011) found that principals in pedagogically high and low performing schools reported doing many of the same things to improve classroom pedagogy although principals in high-performing schools dedicated more attention to building their own capacities and less to supportive community involvement. Pedagogically high performing teachers placed greater value on leaders supporting their collaborative work and the involvement of parents in student learning, whereas pedagogically low performing teachers placed greater value on principals helping with student discipline and accessing instructional resources (p. 51).

Leithwood (2011) noted, "that a narrow focus on classroom instruction (a variable on the rational path), the dominant focus in much current educational policy, will often be necessary but rarely will it be sufficient" (p. 52). Leithwood (2011) elaborated further on this point by concluding that the most instructionally helpful leadership practices were: focusing the school on goals and expectations for student achievement, keeping track of teachers' professional development needs, and creating structures and opportunities for teachers to collaborate.

Terosky (2014) added to the literature on leading for learning with her study on instructional leadership in which she highlighted this leadership task area as one grounded in a learning imperative. She described a learning imperative as a concept that advanced the literature on instructional leadership and leading for learning in two ways: first, it highlighted that the purpose of schools, and leaders for that matter, is grounded in learning and second it added an element of intensity to capture the aspiration behind the imperative to lead learning.

In her study, she identified research that had found that educational leadership was synonymous with instructional leadership in that principals were expected to direct their attention to creating conditions for enhanced teaching that ultimately improves students' achievement. Terosky (2014) stated, "It seems like common sense that the primary responsibility of principals should be to enhance learning. After all, the ideal vision of schools is exactly that—learning—albeit contextually defined, but learning nonetheless" (p 16). Terosky concluded that instructional leadership plays a role in affecting learning in that it places learning in the forefront and that it emphases the need to prioritize learning.

In a study conducted by Handford and Leithwood (2013), the authors investigated the connection between leadership and learning by focusing in on what specific leadership practices that teachers interpreted as signs of trustworthiness on the part of their principals. Handford et al. (2013) declared, "Most available evidence indicates that trust is a core component of leadership" (p. 194). These authors found that teacher trust in principals is most influenced by leadership practices which teachers interpret as indicators of competence, consistency and reliability, openness, respect and integrity.

49

They noted that, "these practices are explicitly available to teachers when making judgments of trustworthiness and they provide practical guidance for school leaders in their efforts to build trusting relationships" (Handford et al., 2013, p. 208). The results of the Handford et al. study reinforced the notion that for teachers, leader trustworthiness is an important factor as teachers think about their work as well as addressing the challenges that they face in improving their practices.

Conceptual Framework

Improving organizations requires understanding them. Understanding complex organizations, such as schools, requires the use of a good theory. Schein's (2010) culture theory was selected to guide, describe, and analyze the data of this doctoral study because the theory illuminates culture from the standpoint of the observer and it describes that culture can be found via three levels; artifacts, espoused beliefs and values and basic underlying assumptions.

The conceptual framework based upon Schein's theory for this study is illustrated in figure 2.1.
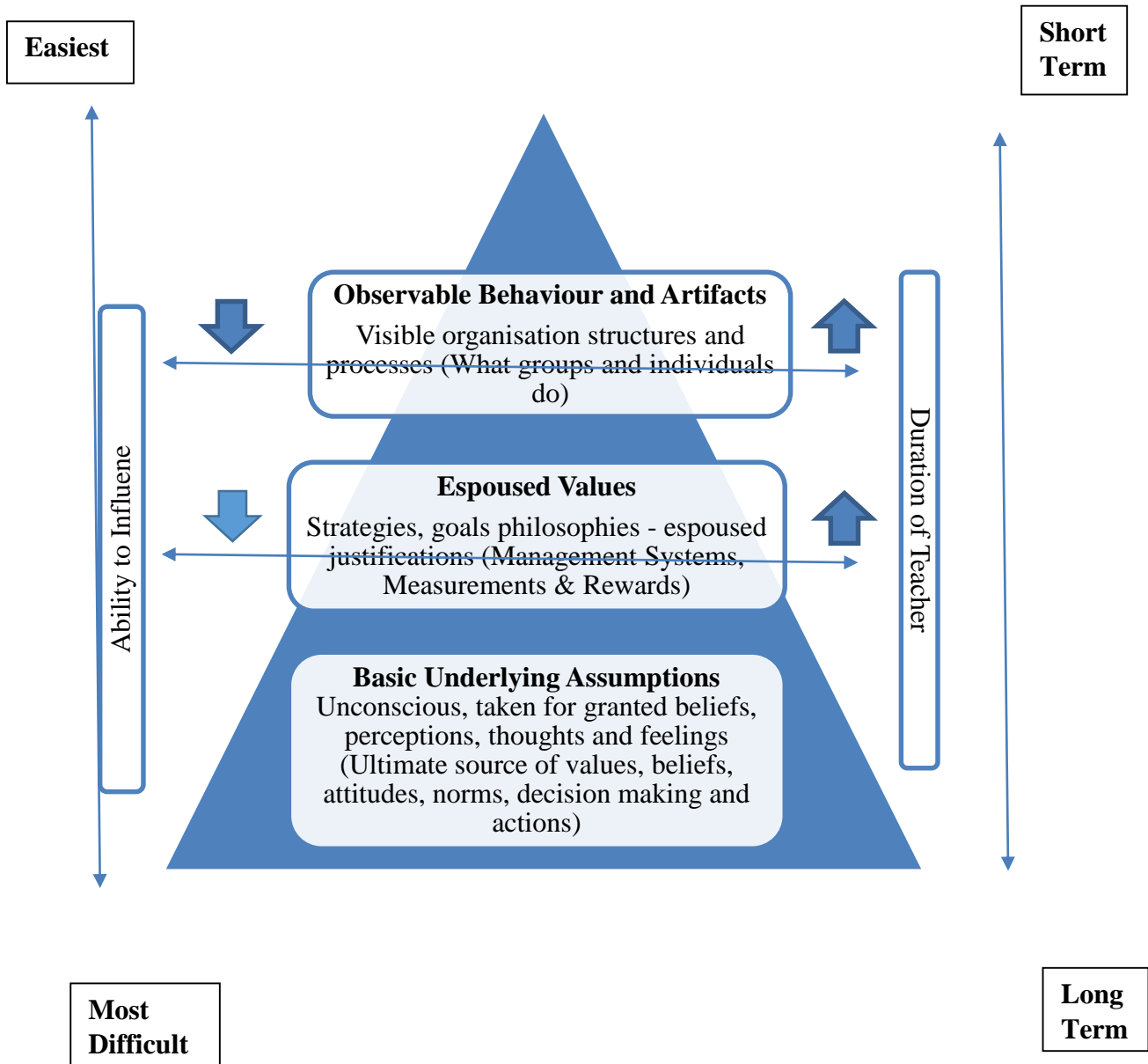
Figure 2.1. Schein's levels of culture model. Adapted from *Organizational Culture and Leadership* by E. Schein, 2010, Fourth Edition, p. 24.

As illustrated in figure 2.1, Schein (2010) described artifacts as attributes that can be seen, heard and felt when entering an organization for the first time. Artifacts are the visible displays of an organization such as its facilities, office, furnishings, visible awards and recognition, its technology and products, the ways that its members dress, how each person visibly interacts with each other and with organizational outsiders and even

company slogans, mission statements and other operational creeds just to name just a few. Artifacts make up the physical components of the organization that convey cultural meaning. Artifacts may be easy to apprehend but difficult to interpret without knowledge of the two deeper levels within Schein's model.

The second level deals with the professed culture of an organization's members - the espoused beliefs and values. These are statements that members make about the way things are within an organization and what people are supposed to do. Shared values are the individuals' preferences regarding certain aspects of the organization's culture such as customer service or loyalty. They represent things that one should and ought to do of organizational culture. Although more important than the first level, artifacts, they still leave large areas of behaviour inexplicable, leaving us with a feeling that we comprehend only a piece of the culture.

At the third and deepest level are found the organization's deeply embedded basic assumptions, which are difficult, if not impossible to communicate. Basic beliefs and assumptions include the impressions of each individual about how trustworthy or supportive the organization actually is and are often deeply ingrained within the culture of an organization. These are the elements of culture that are unseen and are not identified in everyday interactions between the organization members. Within this third level, culture is a set of basic assumptions that defines for us what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally, to what is happening and what actions to take in various kinds of situations. Additionally, these are the elements of culture, which are often taboo to discuss inside the organization. Many of these unspoken rules exist without the conscious knowledge of the members within the organization. These

assumptions are taken for granted and they provide strong communal guidelines as they tell us who we are, how to behave towards each other and how to feel good about ourselves.

Schein determined that organizational cultures exist in a context and that culture can be found within each level. He suggested that, "culture arises through shared experiences of success" (Schein, 2010, p. 56). Using Schein's model, understanding puzzling and contradictory organizations becomes more apparent. For example, an organization can acclaim to high moral standards at the second level of Schein's model while at the same time displaying inquisitively opposing behaviour at the third and deepest level of culture. Superficially, organizational rewards can suggest one organizational norm but may imply something completely different at the deepest level. Consequently, Schein believed that the understanding where culture exists at any level now requires some understanding of all the levels within his model.

Consequently, referring to the definition of school culture provided by Kaplan and Owings (2013), the data collection methods and instruments utilized in this study will seek to investigate the framework of shared but taken-for-granted assumptions, values, norms, and long term beliefs and practices about school leadership and learning that teachers and administrators consider important. How the various elements of the conceptual framework are connected to the research questions and, in turn, the study's interview and observation protocols, is explained more fully in chapter three.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach to examine the perceived nature of the professional leadership culture of one school and its perceived relationship to student learning. Creswell (2007) noted that the procedures for conducting research evolve from a researcher's philosophical and theoretical stances. The study of culture can be approached from a variety of research paradigms; the methods of this study were oriented within an interpretivist paradigm (Burrell & Morgan, 1985). I considered it appropriate from this paradigm to examine culture with a subjective, relativist ontological perspective with a constructivist epistemological stance. Following a statement of the epistemological basis and purpose of this study, this chapter provides details of the research design, a description of the case study methodology, procedures for identifying sites and participants, approaches to data collection, data analysis methods, and a brief discussion of the procedures for ensuring the trustworthiness of the study. Finally, ethical considerations necessary for this study will be discussed.

Epistemological Basis for the Study

I believe that a constructivist viewpoint most appropriately represents my philosophical stance toward the study and the nature of knowledge that it may produce. Driscoll (2005) suggested that constructivism is based on the belief that learners construct knowledge as they attempt to make sense of their experiences. Denzin and Lincoln (2011) noted, "The *constructivist* paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create

understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures" (p. 13). The constructivist orientation emphasizes that researchers make an interpretation of what they find, an interpretation shaped by their own experience and background (Creswell, 2007).

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) found that constructivism is based on gaining understanding by interpreting subject perceptions; they added, "Critically framed, persistent *how* questions remind us to bear in mind that the everyday realities of our lives-whether they are being normal, abnormal, law-abiding, criminal, male, female young, or old-are realities we do" (p. 353). Corbin and Strauss (2015) noted that qualitative researchers want the opportunity to learn more about the human responses that attract them, they want the opportunity to connect with their research participants and to see the world from their viewpoints. This describes my orientation, which entails incorporating the constructivist viewpoint; it was my intent to make sense of, or interpret, the findings based on my own experiences and background while emphasizing what Creswell (2007) described as the need to understand the multiple meanings others have about their world.

Merriam (2009) acknowledged the fact that within qualitative studies, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection. This is particularly the case with constructivism as, "everyday realities are actively constructed in and through forms of social action" (Denzin et al., 2011, p. 341). As such the research methodology includes conducting a qualitative case study approach involving onsite observations as well as individual face-to-face interviews.

Ultimately, qualitative research is subject to researchers' personal biases, which arise from their philosophy. When conducting this study, I needed to be aware of my position in regard to my viewpoint. Merriam (2009) noted that, rather than trying to eliminate these biases or subjectivities, it is important to identify and monitor them as to how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data. My reflexivity regarding my own positionality was a constant focus during this research journey.

Research Design

According to Merriam (2009), research could be defined as the activity of any gathering of data, information or facts about a topic for advancing knowledge. Merriam believed that research, in its broadest sense, is a notion of inquiry or investigation by which we know more about something than we did before engaging in the process. Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a view of the world and the study of issues. Creswell (2007) stated, "We use qualitative research because we need a complex detailed understanding of the issue" (p. 40). Issues that involve the human condition typify common topics on which qualitative research is often based.

Given the nature of this study, a qualitative approach offered certain advantages over a quantitative design. Qualitative research attempts to explain how events occur (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative designs are optimal for investigating human behaviours in their natural setting and events as they occur. Consequently, since the professional leadership culture in a specific school context, which involved the perception of administrators and teachers, was the focus of this study, a qualitative approach was considered appropriate.

At the basic level, Denzin and Lincoln (2003) observed that qualitative research is a positioned activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. Merriam (2009) added that qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences.

A Case Study Approach

The study was conducted via a qualitative site case study involving on-site observations as well as individual face-to-face interviews in one school. Case studies underpin a large proportion of research books and articles in psychology, anthropology, sociology, history, political science, education, economics, management, biology, and medical science (Flyberg, 2011). Yin (2003) stated, "case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (p. 13). This study was partly exploratory (in that it provides information about professional leadership cultures that will hopefully be expanded by other researchers) and partly explanatory (in that it will provide insights into the nature of Schein's culture framework, and its application in a school setting).

Yin (2003) elaborated three types of case study: exploratory (as a pilot to other studies or research questions), descriptive (providing narrative accounts) and explanatory (testing theories). Yin (2003) further elaborated that the case study method allows the investigator to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events such as organizational processes, relations and others. Stake (2005) pointed out that case study is more about choosing what is to be studied rather than being a choice of methods.

Creswell (2007) on the other hand chose to view it as a methodology, "a type of design in qualitative study research, or an object of study, as well as a product of inquiry" (p. 73). In this study, I have chosen the case study approach as a vehicle for examining the phenomenon of professional leadership culture in one school in one system. I characterize it as a case study in that will provide a "thick" descriptive analysis of a phenomenon within what Creswell (2007), and Merriam (2009) described as a bounded system.

This study utilized both interview interactions in addition to sustained observations. As Stakes (1995) noted, making no attempt at observation over time or attention to any changes over time arises in a method that resembles a direct interpretation by the researcher of the individual instance. Also, Lancy (1993) further elaborated that the direct policy implications of case study research sets apart those who do case studies from other qualitative researchers.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), considered case study to include the following characteristics: rich and vivid descriptions of events relevant to the case, a chronological narrative of events relevant to the case, a blending of the description of events with the analysis of them, a focus on individual actors or groups of actors, seeing understanding of their perceptions of the events, and a highlighting of specific events that are relevant to the case. The researcher is integrally involved in the case and an attempt is made to portray the richness of the case in writing up the report (p. 182). This was reflected in my study where my focus was on interpreting the results from the semi-structured interviews with a school based administrator and teachers over a specified amount of time. These interpretations came from the rich descriptions provided from the participants' responses, my observations, and my subsequent analysis of both sets of data.

With the analysis, my goal was to develop my understanding of how these professionals perceived the nature of the pervailing professional culture within their school and its influence on student learning .

Data Collection Procedures: Identification of Sites and Participants

I selected the school division in which the study school was located by mailing out a general letter of invitation to all the Saskatchewan school division directors seeking participation. This letter of invitation is found in Appendix D. From the responses to this invitation, one urban school division was selected. In regard to the identification of the school site, one elementary school (pre-K to grade eight) was selected to participate in this research study by a senior administrator of the school division. The principal from the selected school received a letter of introduction (Appendix E), which explained the purpose of the study along with a general overview of this principal's role as a participant.

In selecting participants, the objective was to interview the principal (as a key school based administrator) and five teachers. To qualify for this study, prospective participants met the following requirements: (a) a willingness to participate in the study; (b) be currently serving as a school administrator or teacher at the school; and (c) have served in a professional capacity at this school for at least one year. In addition, efforts were made to ensure a representation of participants across grade levels and professional responsibilities.Teachers received a letter of introduction (Appendix F), which explained the purpose of the study along with a general overview of their role as a participant.

Data Collection Procedures: Interviews and Observations

Merriam (2009) pointed out that research is a systematic process through which we come to know more about something than we knew before engaging in the process. The following sections present the framework and strategies used to engage in the process of knowing more.

Schein's (2010) organizational culture and leadership theory provided the conceptual framework for the examination of the school's culture which is derived in part from the programs, practices, and instructional strategies associated with increasing student learning. Schein (2010) identified three basic levels of culture separated by how easily one can visualize them and their impact on action within an organization. These three levels are artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions.

Two methods of data collection were utilized: interviews and observations. These are described below:

Interviews

Creswell (2007) listed several steps to follow as a procedure for interviewing. They include: identifying interviewees based on purposeful sampling procedures, determining what type of interview is practical and will result in the most useful information to answer research questions, using adequate recording procedures, designing and using an interview protocol form, refining the interview questions and procedures further through pilot testing, determining the place for conducting the interview, obtaining all necessary consent from the interviewee, and during the interview sticking to the interview questions, completing the interview within the time specified if at all possible, being respectful and courteous, and offering few questions and advice (pp. 133-134). I followed a similar process to that outlined by Creswell (2007).

The role of the interviews was to uncover the thoughts, feelings, and interpretations related to each of the elements of professional leadership culture as participants lived it. Interviews were constructed on the basis of Schein's framework (artifacts, beliefs and values and underlying assumptions) with additional emphasis upon contextual realities of school and professional experiences and relationships: e.g. how teachers and administrators interact; and how they think about the culture that exists amongst professionals.

Determining the Nature of the Interview

Before any interviews or observations were scheduled, all participants were required to sign by a specified date the letter of consent (Appendix G). Once this letter of consent was signed and received via a subsequent email or in person, interviews were held with the school based administrator and the selected teachers at a mutually agreed upon time and date.

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were deemed the most practical for gathering the information as this format will allow participants to tell their story in regard to the professional leadership culture within their school. The interviews included semi structured open-ended questions and two interview protocols were developed for teachers (Appendix A) and administrators (Appendix B). Interviews were designed to elicit information regarding professional leadership culture and were based on the elements of culture identified by Schein (2010) according to the conceptual framework of this study.

There were interviews with each participant consisting of a main interview and a follow up session. At key points during each interview, the researcher restated information to the participant to determine accuracy. The length of the interviews ranged

from 45 minutes to 90 minutes depending on the depth of the participant's feedback. The interviewer, following a prescribed protocol, took detailed and structured written notes during each interview. These handwritten notes allowed the researcher to capture key statements and themes as well as complete any early coding that was possible. The interviews were audio recorded in order to ensure the accuracy of the direct quotes, which were included in the text of this dissertation document, and greater accuracy of reporting and integration of ideas.

In the follow up interview, the opportunity for elaboration and further explanation of the initial information was provided. Participants' right to modify or change their information applied until all data were pooled for analysis. This discussion was shorter in duration than the initial interview and was conducted in an alternative setting or mode such as email as required by the circumstances and availability of the participants.

In the final data collection stage, transcripts were provided to all participants for the purpose of member-checking and participants were asked to review them and suggested changes if required. Signoffs were obtained from participants ensuring the accuracy of the transcripts (see Appendix H). Member checking occurred after all interviews were completed.

Observations

Merriam (2009) suggested that observations take place in the setting where the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs and that they represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest. Creswell (2007) saw the process of observing as a series of steps:

- The selection of a site to be observed and obtaining permission to gain access to the site, at the site identifying who or what to observe, when, and for how long,

- Determining the role to be assumed as an observer.

- Designing an observation protocol as a method for recording notes in the field.

- Recording aspects such as descriptions of the informant, physical setting, specific events and activities as well as your own reactions (pp.134-135).

The Role of the Researcher/Observer

I followed a similar process to that outlined by Creswell (2007). Specifically, I observed the professional leadership culture within a school. This involved observation of teachers engaged in collaborative work with other professionals via staff room interactions, as well as professional interactions during activities associated with professional leadership projects. For example, curricula change initiatives, school effectiveness initiatives, assessment meetings, and professional development workshops, among others. Observations of formal exchanges in the staff room and in other school contexts were observed. Many of these interactions were not be preplanned by the researcher but instead were conducted upon invitation from individual staff members and administrators based upon formal interviews and informal discussions.

Observations were conducted over a period of five days. It has been noted in the ethics proposal (see approval certificate Appendix I) that there would be no direct observation of groups of students or individual students as they are not the focus of this study. I focused specifically on the professionals within the school.

Identifying What to Observe, When and For How Long

Merriam (2009) noted, "What to observe is partly a function of how structured the observer wants to be. Just as there is a range in structure in interviewing, there is also a range of structure in observation" (p. 120). Consequently, a code sheet was established to record behaviour during the observation (Appendix C). This form was based on Schein's (2010) organizational culture concept model, consisting of three levels: artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions. Information gathered from this protocol allowed the researcher to systematically gather and interpret school events and processes related to school wide programs. The three levels of culture depicted in Schein's (2010) framework provide a structure for gathering data on the school's professional leadership culture. Five days for school observations were selected in consultation with school principals to minimize disruptions to school routine. This written account of the observation then form the field notes, which are analogous to the interview transcripts.

Observation activities included walk-throughs of sections of the school, observations of specific school activities, observation of noon hour, before school, and after school interactions, observations of staff room and other observations upon invitation from participants. Also, in order to enrich the ideas and commentaries that emerged from the interviews, observations were conducted on how these professionals used school walls, bulletin boards, classroom doors, areas within the staff room, and display cases.

These observations were recorded through the maintenance of a continuing log (field notes) throughout the research process. This included records, memoing, and my interpretations/commentary on the observations described above. Where they could not

be recorded immediately, notes and reflections were recorded at the earliest opportunity following the observation. The follow up interviews provided an opportunity to obtain clarification, explanation, elaboration regarding specific observations and their implications.

Locating the Research Activities

General observations occurred as early as possible in my involvement in the school, before the interviews commenced. These took the form of walkthroughs,which were essentially visits to major areas where the professional staff were located (e.g., office area, staff room, gymnasium, etc.). More specific observations took place later and upon invitation from conversations with the school professionals. This is because interviews helped to locate possibilities, location, and timing of observations. The pilot study provided support for this process in that the interviews provided numerous possibilities for follow up interviews and observations. Therefore, as the data collection unfolded, interviews and observations was parallel rather than sequential.

The Pilot Study

Pilot interviews were conducted with two participants (one school based administrator and one teacher) in a different school setting who were not part of the sample for this case study. Creswell (2007) reported that the challenges in qualitative interviewing often focus on the mechanics of conducting the interview. In recognizing this challenge, the purpose of the pilot interviews was to assess the efficacy, and if necessary to improve, the semi-structured interview guide. Merriam (2009) declared, "Pilot interviews are crucial for trying out your questions" (p. 95). She further elaborated

that pilot interviews give the researcher some practice in interviewing but they also allow the researcher to quickly learn which questions are confusing and rewording, which questions produce useless data, and which questions suggested by the respondents should have been included in the first place. Additionally, the pilot interviews offered a means of ensuring that the interviews can be conducted within the proposed time limits outlined on the forms while allowing participants to provide accurate and complete information. This timing technique was crucial as the researcher attempted to find the appropriate pacing during the interviews.

The context and structure of the pilot study involved one urban system. The administrator interview of the pilot study was conducted with a principal in a Pre-K to grade three school with about 740 students. The teacher interview was conducted with a school learning facilitator (grades eight to twelve) with about 747 students.

The objectives of the pilot study were as follows:

1. To develop an idea as to the time required for the interview and individual responses.

2. To refine the alignment between the individual questions and the conceptual framework based on Schein's model.

3. To provide an opportunity to test the construction of the entire instrument and the construction of the individual items.

4. To gauge the capacity of the questions to provide rich descriptive data on each research question.

5. To refine the researcher's skills of interviewing and recording information in preparation for data collection, presentation and analysis in the chapter, summarize along with outcomes.

Interviews were conducted with one administrator and one teacher. Each interview was completed within one hour. Following the interviews, debriefing sessions were held with each participant in order to obtain feedback on the interview and possibilities for enhancing its structure and relevance.

Outcomes from the Pilot Study:

After feedback from the participants, specific refinements to the instrument structure were completed as follows:

1. Specific refinements to individual question items on the teacher/administrator interview protocols - Deletion of questions; removing of redundant items (repetition); clarification of academic terms to facilitate greater participant understanding comfort and ease of response (e.g. the terms shared leadership; professional leadership culture).

2. Simplifying the structure of the observation form - Specifically, clarifying areas of focus for observation, the nature of professional actions observed, and the relationship between the interview and the observations.

3. Researcher approaches - Probing questions as follow ups, timing, adequacy of response time, etc. were utilized as a means to further explore the responses of participants, answer any of their questions and engage in self-reflection upon completion and review of the interviews.

4. Highlighting possibilities for follow up interviews and observations - Emerging from the initial interviews were topic ideas: e.g. the quality of trust emerging from the culture within the school; the importance of collaboration to the particular staff; the use

of 'grade-alike' groupings (collaboration); professional development (adequacy and implications for the staff planning process).

Alignment of Research Questions, Framework and Instruments

To illustrate the interconnection of the purpose and research questions of this study with its conceptual framework and the data collection approaches, Table 3.1 contains a representation of how this unfolded in the study.

Table 3.1

Alignment of Research Questions and Framework

Research Question	Research Question Components	Interviews Teacher and Administrator Question	Observations/Field Notes
Research Question 1	**i. Observable behaviour & artifacts**	*"experiencing the culture" Q1* *"describing the culture" Q2* *"teacher leadership examples" Q3* *"admin leadership examples" Q3A* *"shared leadership skills" Q5* *"examples of shared leadership" Q5A, Q5B* *"building leadership capacity" Q6, Q6A* *"socializing new members" Q7*	**What**: Observation of teachers and administrators engaged in collaborative work with other professionals. Staff room interactions and professional interactions during activities associated with professional leadership projects e.g. curriculum change initiatives, school effectiveness initiatives, assessment meetings, professional development workshops, etc.
	ii. Espoused Values	*"value placed on leadership" Q2A* *"collaboration as an espoused value" Q4* *"shared leadership" Q4B* *"major factors influencing the culture of the school" Q8*	**Who**: The focus of observation is school professionals (specifically teachers and school administrators)
	iii. Underlying Assumptions	*"value placed on leadership" Q2A* *"socializing new members" Q7* *"major factors influencing the culture of the school" Q8*	**Where**: In such areas as hallways, classrooms, the office area and the staff room. **How**: Many of these interactions are not preplanned by the researcher but will be conducted upon invitation from individual staff members and administrators based upon formal interviews and informal discussion. It is however anticipated that observations will

			be conducted over a period of at least five days.
Research Question 2	i. **General Perception**	"aspects influencing learning" *Q1* "ideal leadership activities for learning" *Q6*	**What:** Observation of teachers and administrators engaged in collaborative work with other professionals. Staff room interactions and professional interactions during activities associated with professional leadership projects e.g. curriculum change initiatives, school effectiveness initiatives, assessment meetings, professional development workshops, etc.
	ii. **Decision Making**	"decision making impacts on learning" *Q4*	
	iii. **Shared & Collaborative Leadership**	"shared leadership impact on learning" *Q2* "teacher collaboration impact on learning" *Q3* "administrator-teacher collaboration impacts on learning" *Q3A*	**Who**: The focus of observation is school professionals (specifically teachers and school administrators) **Where**: In such areas as hallways, classrooms, the office area and the staff room.
	iv. **Administrative Leadership**	"admin leadership impact on learning" *Q2A* "administrative collaboration impacts on learning" *Q3A*	**How**: Many of these interactions are not preplanned by the researcher but will be conducted upon invitation from individual staff members and administrators based upon formal interviews and informal discussion. It is however anticipated that observations will be conducted over a period of at least five days.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of understanding and making sense of the data
(Merriam, 2009). Analysis and interpretation of these data related to the two research
questions brought together the triangulation of comprehensive information from a variety
of sources, following the procedural steps outlined by Creswell (2007). Relevant data
related to the two research questions were gathered through interviews and researcher
observations. Creswell (2007) added, "This process involves recording information

through various forms, such as observational field notes, interview write-ups, mapping, census taking, photographing, sound recording, and documents" (p. 138). Creswell (2007) elaborated that the role of interviews for data analysis is to invite the interviewee to open up and talk in order; while observation is a skill, it is an essential process for recording information is a skill that requires recording information through a different form.

For the purposes of this study, the interviews were considered to be the primary source of data. Information from the observations were utilized as a source of verification and elaboration of information.

Analysis Procedures

The data were analyzed for this study from the particulars to the more general perspectives to derive categories and themes based on Saldana's Codes-to-Theory Framework (2013). I identified the units of meaning (categories) in the data with the use of NVIVO version 11 analytic software combined with my reading and interpretation of the transcripts. This allowed me to search for meaning by first identifying the smaller units of meaning in the data (categories) which later served as the basis for defining larger categories of meaning (themes). An elaboration of Saldana's Codes-to-Theory Framework is provided below.

Coding and Theme Development

The Codes-to-Theory Frameowrk was utilized in analyzing perceptions relating to the professional leadership culture, and was based on coding methods developed by Saldana (2013), who referred to a code as "most often a word or a short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute

70

for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p.3). I adapted a model provided by Saldana (2013, p. 13), illustrated in figure 3.1
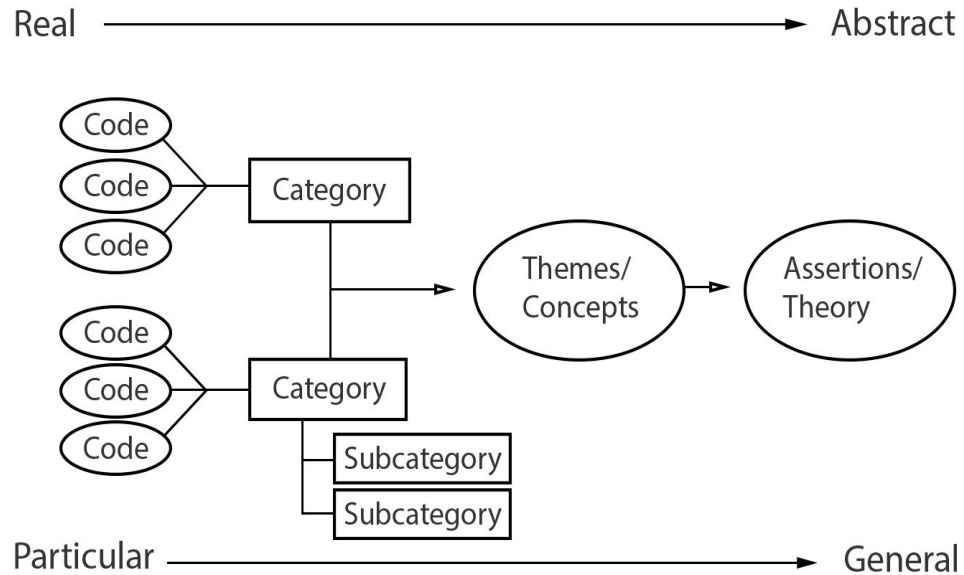
Figure 3.1. Saldana's Codes-to-Theory Model for Qualitative Inquiry. Adapted from Saldana (2013) *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (*2nd edition*)

I identified the units of meaning by carefully reading through the transcripts from the one-on-one interviews. Using open coding (Saldana, 2013), I let the units of meaning emerge from the data itself noting very finite categories. These units of meaning were written in the margins on the hard copy transcripts. I completed an analysis of all interviews before beginning the subsequent second round of analysis.

In the second round, categories, which are a grouping of codes that go together and the formation of subcategories, which, as Saldana (2013) found, are a smaller theme or finding that exists within the larger category, would be created. Quotes for all the themes were placed on a matrix using the NVIVO 11 software. This provided a visual framework to develop questions along with the participant responses and themes

identified by the researcher. Lastly, all of the themes were reviewed along with the responses from the participants.

During this final analysis I completed some reflection where I considered what I saw within the data in regard to themes or concepts within the categories. Merriam (2009) found that the set of categories should seem plausible given the data from which they emerge, thereby causing independent investigators to agree that the categories make sense in light of the data. I looked for ways to combine certain themes that emerged from the first analysis. Creswell (2007) referred to this point as saturation in which he observed that the researcher realizes that there is no new information, insights or understandings, which are forthcoming to add to the understanding of a category. This afforded me the final opportunity to verify the data collected and to provide additional information for the researcher to include in the description of the collaborative process from the teachers' perspective.

Finally, I took great care to ensure that the data made sense. Merriam (2009) identified the achievement of this as rich and thick description. In attaining this description, it will allow the reader to make decisions regarding transferability. Such descriptions draw pictures in words of something tangible, in this case a school's professional leadership culture giving vivid descriptions of what it feels and looks like.

I used a practical approach, which as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) consists of choosing a problem and stating the research question, maintaining a balance between objectivity and sensitivity and using the literature (p. 36). In utilizing a practical approach and striving for a balance between objectivity and sensitivity, I focused on managing the data collected from the one-on-one interviews and observations.

The data analysis and conclusions drawn in the qualitative study of leadership culture within schools utilized what Creswell (2007) termed "data transformation." The qualitative data was identified through the creation of codes to identify reoccurring themes. The identification of themes from the qualitative data allowed the researcher to compare the data resulting in greater conviction for the study's conclusion and recommendations for further study. Merriam (2009) corroborated this thought on analysis and conclusions though her view that our analysis and interpretations, and our study's findings, will reflect the constructs, concepts, language, models and theories that were used to structure the research study in the first place (p.48).

In short the data organization and analysis procedures employed in this study were undertaken in seven stages:

1. Initial reading of transcipts. General impression regarding participant voice.

2. Generation of codes and categories through the use of NVIVO 11.

3. Rereading of the transcipts to facilitate refinement, ordering and selection of the categories for the purposes of reporting.

4. Evaluation of the data. Determination of adequacy of interview data and observational field notes regarding the research questions.

5. In-depth reporting of participant voices according to main categories (chapter four).

6. Development of broader themes emerging from the discussion of categories presented in chapter four.

7. In-depth discussion of themes in the form of conclusions (chapter five).

Establishing Trustworthiness

Merriam (2009) suggested that, "being able to trust research results is especially important to professionals in applied fields, such as education, in which practitioners intervene in people's lives" (p.198). Lincoln and Guba (2011) believed that trustworthiness of a research study is important to evaluating its worth. Lincoln et al., (1985) identified several techniques by which trustworthiness can be attained. These are: credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as the naturalist's equivalents for internal validation, external validation reliability and objectivity (pp. 301-331). The means by which some of these elements of trustworthiness were established within this study are described below, paraphrased from the defintions provided by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Credibility - confidence in the veracity and reliability of the findings (p. 301).

Transferability – confidence that the findings have some applicability across other contexts (p. 316).

Dependability – assurance that the findings are consistent and replicable (pp. 316-318).

Confirmability - are shaped by participant voice, not unduly by researcher bias (pp. 318-319).

In light of these constructs, I addressed issues of trustworthiness in several ways: through prolonged engagement in the school and system, through the combination of interview and observational methods, and through careful attention to member checking, where all participants read through their transcripts, providing feedback and confirmation as to their authenticity.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed that these techniques in addition to prolonged engagement in the field and the triangulation of data of sources, methods, and the use of a

reflexive journal in which the investigator on a daily bais, or as needed, records a variety of information about self and method helps to establish trustworthiness (p. 327). One form that was utilized in this study to improve the realibility of the findings was member checking. As part of the analysis for this study, all participants involved in the study scrutinized the observations and findings from the researcher. Transcripts of the interviews were provided to all the participants, who then reviewed them and suggested changes if required. Authorization of the validity of transcripts came in the form of signoffs (Appendix H), which were obtained ensuring the accuracy of transcripts.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) summed up the concept of member checking with their observation that we do not own the field notes that we make about those we study. Thus, in signing this form, the participants acknowledged that the data reflected what was said in the interview.

Furthermore, to make sure that the findings are transferable between the researcher and the participants in the study, thick description is essential. One seeks dependability rather than reliability in that the results will be subject to change and unpredictability (Creswell, 2007). By presenting an appropriate level of detail about methodology and methods, assumptions, and participants I hoped to enhance the possibility that future researchers may successfully replicate studies of this sort or similar studies.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted with a view that the highest possible standards of research ethics and respect for participant confidentiality would be followed. The case study followed the research guidelines and requirements articulated by the Behavioural

Research Ethics Board (Beh-REB) and as such ethical approval has been requested. I have submitted this as a low risk study. The application included the use of participant consent forms, notification of confidentiality procedures, and the release of transcribed data forms.

This research was conducted so that no individual was placed at risk of harm, each individual was fully informed of the purpose and intent of the study, participation was completely voluntary, and the confidentiality of responses was assured to maintain the anonymity of all who participated in the study. All participants were treated respectfully and ethically to maximize attention to the rights of those involved in the study. Any use of written records and written observations of public behaviour was facilitated with the utmost ethical care. Ethics approval certificate can be found in Appendix I.

Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter provided a discussion of the major methodological approaches employed in this study. A qualitative research orientation based on a constructivist epistemology, and using a case study approach, was described as the basis for the collection of data. The site for the study was one elementary school located in an urban school division, and participants included administrative personnel and five school level professionals. Semi-structured interviews and researcher observations conducted over a five-day period were described in some detail as the primary modes of data collection. A pilot study, conducted to test and refine the data collection instruments and protocols, was summarized. In the treatment and broader analysis of the data, Saldana's (2013) Codes-to-Theory Framework, with the additional use of NVIVO 11 software will provide the

structure for data organization and description. A table illustrating the connection among

research questions, conceptual framework, and data collection methods was provided.

Finally, the manner in which this study met the requirements for trustworthiness was

discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Introduction

In this chapter, I present qualitative data obtained from a case study involving the perceptions of educators in one pre-K to grade eight school within a large urban school division regarding the nature of the professional leadership culture and its relationship to student learning. In this study, I proposed a framework of organizational culture and leadership by looking at culture through the lens of Edgar Schein (2010) in which he described culture as composed of three layers – artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and basic underlying assumptions. In determining the connection between the nature of the professional leadership culture of a school, and its relationship to learning, the unique nature of the school's context is a primary consideration. In this chapter the results are presented according to the following two research questions:

1.   What patterns relating to professional leadership culture are perceived by
      school level professionals to exist within their school?

2.   What is the perceived relationship between this culture and student learning
      according to these professionals?

This chapter is based upon a process involving the collection of data via semi-structured interviews, and observations which provided some new information and perspectives, and elaborated on information provided during the interview phase. Data were coded and analyzed using Saldana's (2013) Codes-to-Theory Model. Further analysis was completed from the use of NVIVO 11, combined with my interpretation of

the data through my reading of the participant transcripts. The resulting categories that arose from the voices of the participants are presented for each of the research questions in turn. These data are supplemented by my observations previously recorded in my field notes. Chapter five will include a presentation of the broader themes emerging from this analysis followed by a discussion of conclusions in the light of relevant literature.

School and System Context

The information in this section consists of background information about the school system, school context, and the participants, including their role with the school and their work experience. Pseudonyms were used to identify participants throughout this study.

System Context

According to the school system website, this system was one of the largest school systems in the province at the time of the study. It consisted of over 40 elementary schools, 12 secondary schools/associate schools. The school division served approximately 21, 000 students employing a professional and a support staff of over 2000 individuals. The school division had clear learning priorities identified in its communications literature. The overarching goal was to equip students for success in a world that demands highly literate citizens. In addition, the system was committed to improve learning by strengthening relationships between staff and students. As an organization, the system envisioned a learning community that was caring, committed to celebrating diversity, and had respect for its focus on learning. Ultimately, the school division was focused on having their students acquire the skills they need to be successful in the 21st century.

School Context

The school (hereinafter referred to by the pseudonym ValleyView School) opened in 1988 and served the city's northeast neighborhoods. It was staffed with 29 full-time teachers, six educational associates, one half-time library technician, one vice principal, and one principal. ValleyView had a diverse student population. There were approximately 590 students enrolled. The school offered five kindergarten programs: two half-day classes and three full-day alternate day classrooms. Seven classes spanned the grade levels of one to three, while fifteen classes spanned grades four to eight. Most of the classes were located in the core of the facility, which included instructional spaces for Band, Fine Arts, and Physical Educational. However, due to increased enrollment, ten of its classes were situated in portable classrooms that were attached to the facility's core. One of the portables was dedicated to a 30 computer instructional lab. In addition, the Learning Resource Center had a bank of 14 computers. The school also had a WiFi mobile lab available for student use.

Professionals at ValleyView School sought opportunities to build relationships and partnerships with the broader community. For example, one of its classrooms was utilized by a community cooperative preschool association and the YMCA operated a 'Before and After School' Program in the school. The parent community was actively supportive and involved in their children's education and school. The School Community Council (SCC) and the Parent-School Committee were actively engaged as partners in building understanding with the community and in supporting student learning. Examples of this included the hosting a 'Welcome Back' barbecue in September, a family fun night,

a pancake breakfast in June, and conducting fundraising initiatives to help purchase

computers for the computer lab located within the school.

<div align="center">**The Participants**</div>

The nature of the participants and the pseudonyms used for identifying them were

as follows:

Principal: Mark

Mark's position was related to management of the entire school facility,

specifically in establishing school goals through consultation, collaboration,

communication and cooperation with various stakeholders. These needed to be aligned

with the school division goals, which in turn had to mirror those established by the

Ministry of Education at the provincial level. At the time of the study, Mark had worked

entirely with this one school division. He had 17 years of administrative leadership in

which 13 years were as a principal within four different schools.

Over the years, he had developed an understanding of educational leadership

methodologies, including a 'Leadership for Learning' model (Figure 4.1) developed

collaboratively by the system and school administrators. On the outer layer, the model is

divided into four sections: cultures, vision, relationships, and beliefs. Within the inner

layer four vital processes of the framework consist of communicating, aligning,

monitoring, and managing. At the center of the model are four quadrants: (1) sharing

leadership through building strong teams; (2) setting and living priorities for focused and

resolute action; (3) leading and engaging in learning through stimulating inquiry, and (4)

ensuring expected practice by participating in curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Mark reported that this framework functioned as a model of what leadership should look

like and it acted as a focus for system level discussions and, subsequently school level discussions affecting learning. This artifact came to represent at ValleyView a collective belief in the importance of leadership in learning. All professionals (administrators and teachers) used this as a guide in building their school culture. Mark reflected on the context underlying the use of the model:

> This model was developed by principals, our director at the time and two or three superintendents and probably about 20 or so principals and VPs. That was about a two year's deal: we read research, we told our stories, we talked to the community members about 'does this type of model work because it's a circle?' That type of work at the division level happens a fair bit. There's lot of communities that folks can be a part of if they chose to be. But our VP meetings and our principal meetings are all attended by directors, superintendent, coordinators. They're structured around our learning. Our model is referred to constantly about 'ok here's what we're going to talk about today: differentiation. Here's how it fits into the model. We think it has to do with expected practice' you know, if you see [someone] just doing the same thing every day all the time for 26 kids we know it's not working for some of them. So we would get some PD and some time to talk. Some information then just time to talk. That is huge.

In addition to helping develop this model, Mark also completed his Master's degree in Educational Administration from the local university as well as certificates in crisis intervention and prevention.
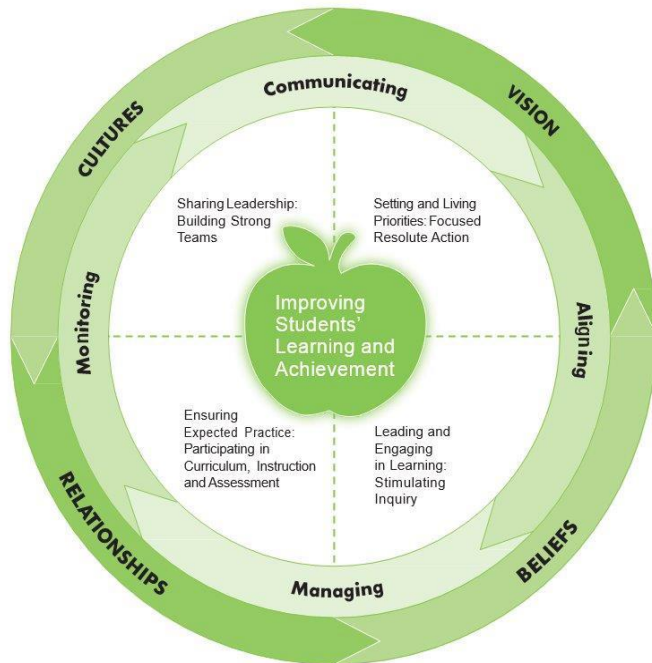
Figure 4.1 Leadership for Learning Model (System name omited, n.d.)

Teachers: Gwen; Jill; Colleen; Celia; Karen

These participants had, on average, about ten years of total teaching experience.
The youngest had six years of experience, and the most experienced teacher had twenty-
six years of experience. This was fairly representative of the teachers in this school.
According to grade level, one taught grade 1, one taught a grade 3-4 split, two were
middle years (grades 7-8) teachers, and one had a split position between grade 3 and
teacher librarian.

Presentation of Data

The data are presented in this section corresponding to the study's research
questions. To reiterate the process identified in chapter three I identified the units of
meaning (categories) in the data with the use of NVIVO version 11 analytic software
combined with my reading and interpretation of the transcripts. Categories were
determined by their frequency of identification within the interview transcripts, and by

their identification by all, or majority of, the participants. For the determination of a majority, at least three educators needed to have identified the same common category within their interviews. Throughout this chapter data from my observations that provided elaboration on the points made by participants were included.

<p align="center">**Patterns Relating to Professional Leadership Culture at ValleyView School**</p>

In response to research question one, I present the comments of participants and my accompanying observations relating to the nature of the professional culture at ValleyView. Participant perceptions are presented according to five broad categories derived from my coding and categorization processes described above. These five categories included: representations of the professional leadership culture, artifacts of collaboration as a shared value, opportunities for building leadership expertise, representations of administrative leadership, and a culture of induction and mentorship.

Representations of the Professional Leadership Culture

Individuals involved in this study talked exclusively about leadership as a group phenomenon, not an individual phenomenon. In fact, by far the most common representations of the professional leadership culture among the participating professionals were: *the pervasiveness of collaboration* among professionals, *a culture of trust*, and *a supportive environment*. Participant voice concerning these representations of the professional leadership culture at ValleyView is elaborated below.

The Pervasiveness of Collaboration

The majority of teachers at ValleyView expressed their belief that the presence of collaboration among professionals was a distinctive characteristic of the professional leadership culture. For example, Celia referred to teacher collaboration at ValleyView in

terms of grade-alike groups. Most teachers belonged to some grade-alike group which was determined by their grade level of instruction. Celia affirmed, "Ok, for me personally I know all of our cause I've got grades three/four so I'm always connecting with both groups and I think that we do all our field trips together, all our special days together as a grade-alike group". Celia commented on the belief that it is in these grade-alike groups that building a shared culture of instruction occurred with the hope of having some common instructional practices which would benefit student learning. Gwen added that she enjoyed being part of a team, she asserted, "So I think that one of the great benefits of being in this school is there are more grade-alike groups to share with. So you can collaborate, you can be with that". Gwen further noted in reference to grade-alike groups:

> I would say they are all similar. We all work very well together, we're similar. We do lots of the same things, we're focused on a goal of increasing our math, doing our reading scores so that's kind of where we're, where our culture has come to.

Karen shared a similar by affirming, "I feel trusted, I feel respected. I also feel that we're encouraged to learn from each other." Karen reflected the belief that they are encouraged as part of a team to build relationships.

The interviews and observations at ValleyView reflected a belief among the school professionals that collaboration had a profound impact on the climate of the school and there was evidence that they valued this relationship. Jill described how an attitude of isolation, even on the part of one teacher, can change the professional climate. She mentioned a time when she worked with another teacher who was not interested in collaboration; he wasn't interested in switching subjects or students. Jill commented on

the belief that he was very much doing his own thing and that really changed the climate. Jill contrasted that example with a successful case of collaboration at ValleyView school. She stated:

> I'll be very honest in saying that I'm very lucky that my grade-share partner and I get along very well. And because of our relationship we have similar expectations of the kids. Although she is a lot younger than me, she doesn't have all the experience that I have, we have the same expectation and we both have the same goals in mind. We work hard when we're here, we collaborate. This year we're even, because we are able to make up parts of our own time table we do subject switches but we are also co-teaching the grade sevens.

Jill noted her preference to be in a climate that fosters collaboration among professionals as she seemed to believe that this has a positive impact on learning.

From his position in the school, Mark also identified collaboration as a relevant piece in the pattern of building professional leadership culture at ValleyView. He referred to the presence of collaboration through, for example, collaborative inquiry teams (CITs) and in the conversations that all the professionals at this school had about learning. He stated:

> And it's just a wider circle of folks to collaborate with I guess I would say. We try to help teachers with that plan around moving forward so we can see some gain with each student. It's not always successful I mean some are ongoing and we try something oh ok, didn't work. But never do we say we're good here, we're just satisfied, that's the best we can do here. There seems to be a spirit of constant improvement or steady improvement.

Mark commented on the belief that collaboration comes from having professional conversations around what works, doesn't work, and the willingness to try different things.

My observations of various activities of the professional staff recorded in my field notes echoed the overall preference among teachers in this school for activities that were team-oriented and collaborative. This preference represented a shared value about student learning, which became evident in my observation of a staff meeting one Friday afternoon. Most teachers were seated at tables according to their grade-alike groups. Mark started the staff meeting with a bouquet to all of those who participated in the successful grade eight ski trip and reminded them of the collaborative inquiry team meeting on February 11th. He then proceeded to provide an overview of the school's data and identified the students most at risk in regard to their learning. He wanted to know what teachers needed from him in order to support them to help improve the learning of these at risk students. He reiterated the importance of placing students at the front and center of any learning strategy, and distributed a handout of interactive learning strategies for the staff to use as an accompaniment to the Response to Intervention model. This emphasis upon Response to Intervention and in particular the caring for and well-being of at-risk students, was a powerful example of learning as a shared professional value among teachers in this school.

However, while the evidence was very strong that collaboration was a shared value among professionals within the school, references were made to the occasional barrier to its effectiveness. Celia for example referred to the occasional times when individuals 'preferred to be an island' and that teachers need to respect that personal

preference. She also noted that real and effective collaboration often took place outside of the formal structures designed for it by others and that this informal element was a critical part of the shared culture at ValleyView.

A Culture of Trust

Trust was a pervasive indicator of the professional leadership culture for most professionals at ValleyView. Karen noted that there was a considerable level of trust among professionals and that teachers 'were not micro-managed.' She believed that this was a major factor in building relationships. Celia added that this culture of trust in the school was "one that was school-wide and interdependent rather than purely classroom-located and independent," she elaborated; "this quality helps us to works as a team." Colleen observed that teachers were trusted, and that they consequently were given a substantial amount of freedom to try new things. She stated, "I think there is also a lot of freedom for us in our teaching strategies and planning, but it's up to us to determine when we want to do that which is very nice." Colleen concluded that this level of freedom helped to build trust and relationships. To clarify Colleen's point, 200 instructional minutes were allocated for certain subjects but it was left up to the individual teachers to decide how to distribute those minutes throughout the week.

Further to the comments made by teachers, Mark stressed the importance of establishing a trust based culture. This was revealed when he mentioned that the culture that he believed they had was not one that said, "he is the expert and if you do what he says, you will be successful." Instead he reflected his belief in improving the risk taking of his staff and he further acknowledged the fact that one of his goals was for them to

value the connection between having trust in trying something new and working in a different way.

Most of the participants identified trust-building as a key strategy needed to build capacity and commitment. Gwen identified the significance of listening as a leadership practice. She stated, "You've got to listen to everyone and just allowing the time for people to get together and have the time to share and collaborate." Celia echoed that belief of trust; she declared:

I think a trust piece to that. I give you time, I trust that you use that effectively. And right now it seems like there's a big accountability piece rather than a trust piece and I think that the two really work against one another.

Celia reported that she wished that they could do away with that accountability piece and it could just be a trust relationship rather than this accountability piece. Celia recalled a time when she worked with a principal who cancelled a meeting due to everyone being so busy and she further elaborated upon the fact that not one person was running out of the building early, they were all there late doing what they needed to do. This example reinforced her belief that you get more bang for the buck if you are willing to say that 'I trust you and to do what you need to do'.

Colleen mentioned trust as well in the context of grade-alike meetings. The trust comes from the fact that they are very much aware if what is going on in each other classrooms, she stated; "Or she knows that she can email me if she forgot to put a lot of things on her sub plan or just check in with her substitute." Colleen acknowledged that she is not sure if this would be a common theme throughout all the grades but she knows

in the higher end where she spends her time, everyone is very approachable which makes it supportive and understanding.

Mark also placed emphasis on the quality of trust in an environment of positive relationships and teamwork. He emphasized the importance of trust, and explained:

Trust, relationships or positive relationships to be more specific than that, a respect for each other, professional respect. I am certain we all know that and nor do I expect everyone to teach the same way or they will be clones of each other, but a spirit of collaboration and a notion that when we come together, we will work together.

With this affirmation, Mark seemed to acknowledge the need to have an appreciation for the nature of trust and its importance in culture-building.

A Supportive Environment

A third representation of the general professional leadership culture of this school that became evident in the commentaries provided by the majority of teachers was the existence of a supportive environment. Colleen noted that the feeling of support at ValleyView had its basis in acknowledgement and respect for differences among professionals, she stated:

I feel people respect each other as professionals and support each other first and foremost and are able to acknowledge there are a lot of different teaching styles, different teaching strategies everyone has, might be their strengths or weaknesses but as a whole it might balance each other and learn from one another.

Karen arrived at a similar conclusion, "I would answer that question by saying that as a teacher in this school. I feel supported. I feel there is a lot of trust with admin team, I feel

very supported and trusted as a professional". Celia echoed those thoughts, though she did have one caveat noting that she would like to see more support in regard to her professional development (PD), she stated; "Then there is professional development (PD) that they give to us and those are the ones they want us attending, not the ones that we seek out on our own." She added, "that is want they want from us. They say, 'this is the way our division is going' and a lot of them [teachers] aren't given a choice. You attend this PD, you will attend this PD." While she appreciated the culture of support at ValleyView school, Celia expressed her belief that it is important for teachers to also have the support in being involved even more in their own professional development choices.

Mark expressed his strong belief in support for teacher learning in formal and informal ways, he noted that it was often demonstrated in collaborative inquiry team meetings and discussions of student data. He elaborated:

But we sort of have a culture in our school where we talk about our data a fair bit. Once a month we have what are called CIT meetings or collaborative inquiry team meetings. And that involves grade-alike teachers getting together and saying 'here are the 3 or 4 students in my class struggling with comprehension, literary text, subtraction' whatever the case may be and then what are we doing to support him or her? So it's a focused conversation about learning and I think our staff would say to have that time to collaborate with their colleagues is good. I do think we have a very strong staff here and we try to put some supports in place for them to learn from each other and that's one of them.

Mark commented on the belief that the collaborative inquiry teams all value improving student learning and that they collaboratively come up with a plan on how to help those learners who are struggling.

Through my observations, it appeared that professional support had become significantly embedded in the culture of the school. The staff members met every Thursday for around one hour to discuss various concerns and school related issues. It was apparent in several instances during my observations that support of teachers in dealing with student learning concerns was a priority for teachers and administrators. In fact, one of those meetings each month was dedicated to discuss in more depth student learning concerns within their collaborative inquiry teams.

Artifacts of Leadership as a Shared Value

Several artifacts of leadership as a shared value were referred to frequently by participants as common activities and mechanisms which facilitated the professional leadership culture, and which created an environment in which leadership was a shared value among professionals in the school. The artifacts which were most prominent in teacher comments and in the interactions that I observed included: *team meetings and grade-alike groups, transparent formal and informal collaborative structures,* and *a collective focus on student learning.*

Team Meetings and Grade-Alike Groups

It became obvious that the formal gatherings of teachers for the purpose of improving instruction and student learning had become an natural and indispensable practice among the professionals, especially in reference to their team meetings and grade-alike groups. In fact, there was little doubt in my mind that this constituted a

central shared value at ValleyView. All of the educators at ValleyView recognized collaboration as an indispensable practice, especially in reference to their collaborative inquiry team (CIT). Gwen commented on her belief in the professional value of collaboration via the collaborative inquiry team meetings where teachers were put into grade-alike groups and where one staff meeting per month was dedicated to having time to meet as well as getting an additional two and one half days to meet and do lots of planning together. All participants discussed collaborative teams and grade-alike groups as a common element of the professional life of the school that had emerged over time. Jill, Colleen, and Celia paid specific attention to grade-alike groupings. Colleen commented:

> Right, I think back to the grade-alike meetings and lots of it is informal. Everyday there would be some kind of informal sharing between me and the grade eight teacher. So that alone I think her and I are very much aware of what's going on in each other classroom's, whether it is exactly the same which isn't the case, but I know what her class is working on and she what is going on in my room.

All the teachers concluded that having time to get together with their grade-alike groupings provided one of their best professional opportunities.

Mark, as a formal leader, reinforced the notion of collaborative inquiry teams and staff meetings as opportunities for shared leadership. He commented on the fact that they have collaborative inquiry team meetings once a month that allow teachers to bring their questions, their learnings, their successes, their concerns in their classrooms to their colleagues and our data team will look at those and determine if there is a pattern or theme. He affirmed:

93

And here is what I know about myself and here's what I know about kids, we try

to have a sense of an open mind here but our job sometimes is to let teachers look

at that information and share their good thoughts around that and perhaps guide it

if needed.

The practice of collaborative inquiry teams was an integral part of the professional work

at ValleyView. As noted throughout this chapter, this structure played an important part

in many aspects of professional leadership culture as evident in the comments of

participants.

This seemed to be reflected in my observations of a staff meeting and a

collaborative inquiry team meeting which involved professionals (administrators and

teachers) sharing their enthusiasm from implementing a 'mathletics' commercial program

to help reach the goal of improving numeracy results, discussing resources for interactive

learning strategies, and reflecting about the implementation of the 'response to

intervention' model. Celia, Karen, Gwen, and Jill focused on the value of the resource

data for improving student learning. These teachers viewed collaborative inquiry teams as

a means by which teachers shared responsibilities to present and lead others on matters

related to resources and assessment results.

Transparent Formal and Informal Collaborative Structures

It was also apparent from teacher commentaries that the valuing of team

deliberation did not occur by accident, and that it was the product of a groundwork for

collaboration that had been established through the initiation of formal and informal

opportunities. Mark added his voice to the existence of collaborative inquiry teams as a

catalyst for establishing collaboration among professionals at ValleyView. He stated:

94

Big time. I think that's huge. That is where again, the thing that I hear over and

over again from teachers here is the importance of those collaborative inquiry

team meetings and it happens easier here because we are a big staff.

Teachers spoke at length about the multiple mechanisms for collaboration in the school,

and the opportunities readily available to observe others teach, learning walks, connecting

with grade level groups, and planning together in committees. Jill stated, "I see people

collaborating with grade-alikes often. That's a big part of this building. And we're lucky

to have that and I think most people realize that". Jill and Colleen applauded the practice

of having a half day release to go and observe other teachers in a different school.

Some saw even greater value in the culture of *informal* collaboration that had

developed. Celia found that more meaningful collaboration occurred when someone was

asking for help and advice on what to do in terms of planning for a specific subject. She

added her own belief that some of the most effective collaboration existed outside of the

times formally scheduled for it. She stated, "I feel like a lot of our collaborating, relevant

collaborating happens from 3:30 to 4 o'clock rather than times that are designated to us to

collaborate". Celia commented on her belief that collaboration was more authentic,

relevant, and effective via connecting with grade-alike groups rather than being forced

into collaborative groups and being concerned about getting the form filled out that

accompanies each collaborative inquiry team meeting.

In addition to the collaborative inquiry teams, Mark also mentioned the value of

collaboration with the concept of having team meetings as a catalyst for building

structures focused on student support. He also described how team meetings were

modelled at the system level with all school administrators. He noted that these were

examples of times when the administrators got together with the special education, behaviour consultants, speech pathologists, and resource folks from central office for about two hours every month and review where they were at in terms of their neediest students.

Mark found that there was a spirit of constant improvement that was shared by professionals at ValleyView. He noted, "But never do we say we're good here, we're just satisfied, that's the best we can do here. There seemed to be a spirit of constant improvement or steady improvement." He concluded that the practice of collaboration between teachers and wider central office folks was also important and it was not unique to ValleyView school.

Teachers were allowed time to meet in their collaborative inquiry teams in order to discuss what they had been doing to help struggling learners. During these meetings, teachers had to complete an online form (see Appendix J) that summarized for the group as well as the administration what they had done since their last meeting to support at risk learners. For example, one of the items on this form read: 'What effect have our actions had, and what are our next steps to support struggling learners?' The discussions among these teachers demonstrated a professional focus on enhanced student learning, leaving me with a strong impression of a staff where the norms of professional commitment and dedication to student well-being prevailed. Though it was obvious that the culture of professional collaboration flourished at ValleyView, it took a variety of forms and appeared at its strongest where these professionals informally structured their own collaborative activities. Nevertheless, the foundation for this had long since been laid by a clear structure for teamwork on the part of the system and school leadership.

A Collective Focus on Student Learning

Most of the professionals commented on their belief in being committed to supporting student learning through sharing within professional collaborative committees, reviewing school data, and having conversations about various instructional strategies to address student weaknesses in order to improve student learning.

Karen reflected upon the enhancement of professional collaboration that had occurred at ValleyView, and she attributed this to the creation of committees to help improve student learning. She discussed the formation of a math committee to improve subtraction scores and providing professional development feedback to other teachers about new resources, math stations, and instructional strategies as tools to help achieve this goal.

Karen also appreciated the quality of collaboration that existed between teachers and the administration in that they were transparent with their data and results, she elaborated:

> But he's transparent about those results and sometimes I don't feel that administrators are very forthcoming with the data and you're left wondering 'is it my class that's not working well? Is the school not doing well or?' He's very transparent and he will show me the data at the division level, he will show me some of the CAT scores where some principals might summarize and not show you the data and not be able to work with you as much.

Celia affirmed the work of school professionals at ValleyView in reviewing school data. She noted, "We did that when the CAT test results came out. We had some time to go over the CAT results as a grade-alike group. I guess to see how those, what we expected

and what surprises were and how we can move forward with our teaching, what the division sees". Karen emphasized the value of being honest and having conversations around how to collaborate in order to improve student learning.

Mark noted that this provided the staff with a cohort of colleagues to work together on a regular basis, try things out, and to provide a focus for that work. They set up practices where they walked into classrooms, did 'learning walks' and in general created more openness.

This was reflected in my observations of staff meetings and collaborative team meetings in which attention was devoted to for example: the focus on special needs and the Response to Intervention model and the implementation of Interactive Learning Strategies in classrooms. It was evident that teachers were encouraged to adapt these instructional strategies to their own classroom/learner contexts. This was reflected in various activities of the professional staff who reiterated the overall preference among administrators and teaching professionals in ValleyView for collaborative activities focused on improving student learning. Also, information was shared regarding an arts education project which received funding for implementation in their learning resource center. Lastly, Mark discussed having a 'math and muffin' initiative in which all teachers would teach math at the same time period (9-10) following which parents were welcomed to attend, observe, and share in a muffin to celebrate the student math learning. For all the professionals at ValleyView, frequent and focused interaction in small groups was the norm: reviewing, analyzing, and discussing data on what targeted support needed to be in place to help students improve.

From my observations, the belief and value of placing students at the center of learning was demonstrated further on February 11, 2016 when the staff met for a staff/collaborative inquiry team meeting. The first part of the meeting was a discussion of some celebrations (e.g., 100 days of school) and then administrative tasks (report cards, comments, due dates, etc.). Next, the vice-principal shared some information regarding differentiation and the Response to Intervention model. She inquired as to who needed targeted support to help students. I noted that this was an increasingly important focus for all the professionals in this school. This was a practice that they were well used to and this strategy was one in which they had all undertaken some significant professional development. In addition, some formative assessment techniques (e.g., scan flash cards) were also discussed as possible strategies to help improve student learning.

Opportunities for Building Leadership Capacity

For the teachers at ValleyView, there was an apparent concern for building capacity among the professional staff in engaging with each other. Most commonly they identified *intervisitation*, *'critical' friends, mentorship and sharing expertise,* and *shared leadership among professionals* as opportunities for building leadership capacity at ValleyView school.

Intervisitation

All the participants appreciated having the opportunity to develop their expertise by working in an environment where everyone learns. The intervisitation initiative took the form of being able to visit and observe other classrooms on a regular basis for part of a day. Celia elaborated:

New teachers get time to visit other people's classrooms and so we have two new

grade three teachers this year and they have been into my classroom to observe

and learn. So that's the way that I've been sharing my expertise.

All the participating teachers echoed appreciation for having these types of opportunities

to get together with grade-alike teachers and other colleagues. Colleen noted that the

opportunity existed to build expertise in that the administration provided a substitute for

half a day if she wanted to go and watch another teacher teach a particular concept. Gwen

also identified of the benefits of the grade-alike groups in this school that allowed

everyone the chance to share by providing opportunities to bounce ideas off each other

and share resources. Karen appreciated the practice of being encouraged by the

administration to shadow other teachers, she emphasized; "We are also encouraged to

take a half a day and talk with a colleague, collaborate, observe within the school and

within the division if we'd like". On a similar theme, Jill reflected on the time available

to share and collaborate at ValleyView, she stated:

I see people collaborating with their grade-alikes often. That's a big part of this

building. Any we're lucky to have that and I think that most people realize that.

There are schools where you're on your own and you don't have that, you have to

leave the building to have collaborative time.

Jill further noted that she appreciated having the chance to do some co-teaching with

another teacher and the positive effect that this has on improving student learning, she

elaborated:

So by sharing the leadership, of and I mean her and I [the other cooperating grade

level teacher] plan together, we create the rubrics with the students together. We

do the lessons are sort of back and forth. Sometimes I might take more of a

leadership role and [she] might be kind of moving around and putting out small

fires. We sort of interchange that but I think that each of us with our personalities

and our strong points that I think the kids benefit.

Implementing this culture of intervisitation, it allowed professionals to share their

expertise in terms of what they had been working on, developing some units, and

bringing these findings back to the school and their classrooms. In addition, participants

positively referred to the provision by the system of the opportunity for teachers to visit

other teachers in other schools within the system on a regular basis. The provision for

these opportunities was recognized as a powerful means for teacher development.

Critical Friends, Mentorship, and Sharing Expertise

Karen and Jill also identified the value of sharing expertise as another strategy

that helped to build capacity and commitment. Jill declared, "Also, the mentorship, it's

huge. I think that it's a huge part of learning". She noted that she had never formally been

asked to mentor anyone, she had simply assumed that responsibility toward new

professionals within her grade range. She found that teachers did this naturally at

ValleyView. Karen echoed those thoughts, she stated:

Well I think that just comes when you're helping somebody, it shows that you are

committed and that it's an expectation on our staff. That's kind of laid out on day

one that this is an expectation that we share with one another and that we help one

another.

She acknowledged that when one of the teachers needed help in a particular area, there

was someone in the building who was willing to share their expertise.

101

Mark mentioned his priority for respecting the time of teachers and how he did not wish to take up time that they could better be using to do something better like focusing on learning, structure, assessment. He commented on his belief that his biggest leadership practice was building relationships. He affirmed that a core part of every principal's job was sharing leadership and that was one of the keys to answering the question of how to build strong teams, collaborative inquiry teams, and the resource team meetings. He stressed that it was about setting and living priorities.

Mark also was involved in these types of activities at the division level on an ongoing basis with other principals and system leaders where they worked with each other on initiatives such as critical friends, mentorship, and sharing expertise. Mark talked about the practice of building collaborative expertise through team-building according to 'school alike groups' critical friends. For example, in the system, larger schools, French Immersion schools, smaller schools would all get grouped together. Within that group there would be principals who had various levels of expertise. The meetings of these critical friends took place at the division office every second Wednesday and the goal was to talk about pertinent information in each school. Mark elaborated:

> I think that again our group would say "that's some of the most valuable time we
> have to just sit and say alright within the topic of assessment or the new report
> card, what are some things you are doing at your school to help you see this
> through, to see this goal?" I find those conversations very helpful, very powerful.

Mark noted that having these opportunities were highly beneficial and important because they gave him the opportunity to acquire and model the skills that he wanted the

professionals at ValleyView to embrace, as it was not just the transfer of information, it was making meaning of it with each other.

Shared Leadership among Professionals

All participants identified shared leadership as a professional quality they all valued in this school. Colleen explained, "that happens quite a bit where our principal tries to give teachers the opportunities to present at staff meetings". Gwen and Jill elaborated on the practice of sharing leadership by volunteering with the extra-curricular activities within the school. This entailed co-coaching some sports, organizing dances, concerts, and other school related celebrations. Karen elaborated on some specific examples of areas where teachers exercised leadership:

> I think that teachers show leadership in taking student teachers from the U of S
> and interns. There are quite a few student teachers here from the U of S and doing
> some mentoring with our new teachers on staff as well, there's mentoring
> program, our data team meetings, taking some leadership with particular students
> that need extra support in our school. Our CIT's - I'm sure you've heard about
> lots about today. And you know there are other opportunities, we have math
> nights occasionally or this year it's looking like Math and a Muffin or breakfast so
> there's opportunities for leadership in those and the Maker Space support teams.

Karen commented that leadership was apparent in mentorship activities such as, for example, new staff members, particular students in the school, and students from the university. Karen seemed to reflect the belief that by being a mentor, it allowed her to show leadership to the other teachers and teachers in training in that she would share resources and planning time as a means to assist other professionals.

From an administrative perspective, Mark concurred with the views of teachers on shared leadership as a collective value at ValleyView. He viewed teachers as leaders while recognizing the multidimensional nature of their leadership activity He added, "They are certainly leaders in their classrooms, in their classroom communities with parents. That's the first I would say line of communication". He found that there was a real partnership and that teachers were key to the establishment of that partnership. Mark also noted that teachers shared leadership outside of the classroom. He mentioned their role around joint instructional planning via the math committee, data teams and collaborative inquiry teams. He noted:

> I think that our teachers within the school all take different leadership roles in terms of the work they do with students outside of their classroom. I'm talking extra-curricular, we do school-wide activities, we do care partners that require some leadership.

Mark acknowledged that these actions were admirable because teachers were trying to be leaders within the school, not just the classroom.

These examples of shared leadership were also evident in my observations. My observations of various activities of the professional staff recorded in my field notes provided me with evidence of an emphasis on shared leadership as a norm among the professionals at ValleyView, where teachers were sharing information in large and small groups as well as playing some form of leadership role in leading the majority of the meetings. Teachers were taking charge and leading others within their group during collaborative inquiry team meetings and during staff meetings to add their input or voice

their concerns. These actions reiterated the overall preference of teachers in this school for activities focused on building a team in which they shared leadership.

Mark suggested that this sharing of leadership was important in order to respond to emergent issues amongst the staff. Ultimately, he accepted that sometimes his job was in finding money for a math program or manipulatives that they needed, but it also entailed giving those teachers the time to talk about instruction, learning, and assessment curriculum in their classrooms with each other. He commented on his belief by noting 'our staff would rather do that every time as opposed to listen to me ramble on about why we can't all take a Friday before February out as the sub list gets depleted'.

This was reflected in my observations of a staff meeting that took place at the end of a professional development day on January 29th. Mark started the staff meeting with a short agenda focused on presenting some learning strategies designed as a means to improve student learning. My observations seemed to reflect this notion of shared leadership as there were discussions among all the professionals regarding these learning strategies (e.g. two minute talks, think-pair-share, inside/outside circles, etc.) and how they could best be implemented in the classroom. This sustained and mutually supportive nature of interaction seemed to indicate a sincere belief and desire on the part of all the professionals to consider any strategy that might have a positive effect on student learning.

Not all participants were entirely positive regarding the way in which shared leadership was evident within the school. Colleen acknowledged that shared leadership was represented in numerous other professional activities; she commented:

Again I think that would, I can't think of any examples that are jumping out at me

because I don't think it happens very often but again so I would go to a math

community meeting and I would come back and present at a staff meeting where

admin would be there. But a situation where I've sat down with admin and talked

about kind of shared leadership or collaborating with ideas that would not happen.

However, the majority of teachers mentioned the value of sharing leadership to some

extent. This was evident in the reference to mentorship and grade-alike groups. Gwen and

Karen reported on the importance of showing leadership by mentoring new teachers.

Gwen talked about one teacher who was new, and was being mentored by another

teacher, as an example of how some of those mentorships worked. Karen also

emphasized the importance of helping teachers in terms of professional development in

regard to reading strategies, technology and other activities.

Representations of Administrative Leadership

The participants in this study naturally had their viewpoints about the formal

administrative leadership of this school as an integral part of the professional culture. For

these participants, the role of their formal administrative team was most frequently

represented by three areas of focus, namely: *leadership role extension, a strong focus on*

instructional development, and *communicating what matters* at ValleyView School.

Leadership Role Extension

Overall, the majority of teacher participants noted that administrators

demonstrated leadership beyond their day-to-day formal leadership role through the

organization of such events as math nights, meet the teacher night, carnivals, assemblies,

and staff meetings. Karen discussed the role of the administrative team in reviewing

specific rules, teaching practices, as well as setting up norms and expectations to follow throughout the year. She elaborated:

> Oh I think that starts on the first day and I think that starts with our opening package. Setting up norms and expectations as to how we are expected to interact with each other and carry on in terms of our professional conduct, leadership and just setting those norms up.

Karen further noted that the administrators showed leadership by enabling collaboration by giving teachers days to observe others and collaborate, in finding out what they needed in terms of resources (IPads, school materials, etc.), and in passing along necessary information to other professionals.

Focus on Instructional Development

Most of the teachers noted that administrators demonstrated leadership for teacher learning by focusing on all aspects of student learning, teaching practices, and the assessments of teachers. This meant that as one of the leaders for learning, Mark constantly brought research on best practices and learning strategies to the staff in an attempt to enhance their professional learning. Mark noted that he would do everything in his power as a leader to support teachers in the classrooms and that the administrative team would use whatever model that exists in order to offer all the support that was needed to improve teacher learning.

Colleen agreed that the administration tried to affirm the collective culture by keeping things fairly light in the environment and to keep teachers focused on student learning instead of having to deal with outside problems that took away from that focus.

She also suggested that the administrators put a lot of trust in the capabilities of teachers and that they did not micro-manage what they were doing.

From an administrative point of view, Mark mentioned that administrators demonstrated leadership in their active enhancement of teaching practice by affirming a collective belief in teacher development and a focus on instructional improvement. He explained:

> … there are specific skills that all teachers need in creating an environment, managing a classroom, establishing a culture of learning, communicating with students, all the things that we do around assessment, preparing lessons and all the pieces that go with that.

Mark added that the division helped them with that piece in that they conducted assessments for teaching (Danielson, 2007) where teachers in their first and second year received a minimum of one of these throughout the year, and those who had taught more than five years receive received one evaluation within each five-year time period. Teachers obtained a rating of one to four; and if that rating were low, the teachers received focused assistance.

As mark noted, the focus on instructional development was essentially collaborative:

> … teachers are involved in that; it's a collaborative process so again some of those conversations I think that for me the culture on that is trust. I would hope that for the staff that we work with they know we are going to be supportive as heck if we can be. It might be a balance between pressure and support but I will help you to the best of my ability to become a better teacher.

Mark reflected on his belief that administrative leadership should focus mainly on providing an opportunity to improve teaching collaboratively.

Communicating What Matters

The teachers at ValleyView agreed that the quality of communication coming from the formal leadership within the school provided a foundation for the professional culture that prevailed. They characterized this quality in a variety of ways. Karen observed that she felt trusted and respected, and that this message seemed to be one where they were encouraged to learn from each other. Colleen agreed that high expectations were communicated which forced teachers to double check all forms of communication between parents and the community. Jill added her positive assessment of the effective communication that existed with the school community. She stated:

> But this community also dictates certain things. So this would be one of the schools [within the school division] that has the most helicopter parents. So I really feel like we listen to our community and sometimes our admin almost goes to listen to the community more than even the staff in some cases.

Celia expressed her belief that their school was one that placed a strong emphasis upon academics and that they were an academic school which meant that their leadership team made sure that this message was out there in the community, she stated; "our community knows that we are academic and achieving. These kids are getting high quality education". She commented on the belief that this was something that their leadership valued. Gwen concurred, noting that professionals here were all focused on a goal, they all worked together, and this was what distinguished their culture.

Mark pointed out professionals at ValleyView wanted to keep people informed of their practices, assessments, work in the class, and in the community. He noted that they had a very active parent group and that a majority of those parents made sure that their children were keeping up with assignments as per what was communicated in the class newsletter. Mark was proud of the fact that this form of communication was a huge plus for them at ValleyView and that this represented a real partnership in which teachers were central in building a relationship of open communication.

This emphasis on having effective communication among administration, parents, students, and teachers was obviously given high priority at ValleyView, and it was reflected in my observations of staff and collaborative team meetings which involved administrators and teachers. Specifically, during one staff meeting, Mark emphasized the importance of maintaining good communication with the home, especially with report cards and student led conferences coming up in the following few weeks. Mark reiterated his message that the report cards should be a confirmation of student progress and not a report containing new information that is unknown or foreign to the student and the parents.

The importance of communication was further evident in a collaborative inquiry team meeting where teachers were grouped according to grade levels in which they were actively exchanging information. This communication came in the form of looking at student data and discussing specific students who were struggling in their classrooms. There appeared to be considerable back and forth exchange around brainstorming some possible solutions that would alleviate some of the concerns and hopefully establish a course of action that would lead to an improvement in student learning. The quality of

these exchanges extended well beyond these examples, and was to be seen in many of the interactions between teachers and in-school administrators at ValleyView.

Culture of Induction and Mentorship

Most organizations have some mechanisms by which new members are inducted into their culture. From the reflections shared by the professionals in this study, the formal introduction to the culture of the school took the form of discussions prior to the upcoming school year, separate meetings with the administration of the school, and introductions at staff meetings. As a further often *less formal* means of inducting members to the school culture, they were paired with a mentor whose job was to help guide them through understanding the various artifacts, beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions that formed the culture at ValleyView.

Most of the teachers mentioned a meeting between the administration and other teachers near the end of the school year as means of inducting incoming staff into the culture of the school. This might have taken place in a separate meeting, a staff meeting or a combination of both. Jill discussed the role of the staff meeting as a means of introducing new staff to the some of the existing norms, beliefs, values and underlying assumptions that made up the culture of the school. Jill affirmed that it was at staff meetings where staff were invited to sign up for leadership opportunities in curriculum, extra-curricular activities, etc. Within that introductory meeting, they reviewed the *Education Act* and some reminders of guidelines around ethical behaviour.

Gwen and Celia, who had both joined ValleyView three years previously, echoed those perceptions. Gwen remarked that when she came to ValleyView there were four other new teachers at the same time, so they all learned together and they all got to make

111

decisions together. Celia reported that when she came to this school, there were six new teachers at that time. Evidence of the importance of informal mentorship came when they all met with Mark in late June in the learning resource center (LRC) and they all had a discussion, toured the building, and they sat in on a staff meeting where they just listened. Then after the staff meeting, she was connected with her grade-alike teachers which proved to be an invaluable resource as Mark reported, "these ladies can take you under their wing and teach you everything that you know about life and your grade at this school". Celia admitted that this relationship 'was gold and continued to be gold'. She also reflected on the point that she became more accepting of an informal mentorship leadership role in checking in on new teachers and asking if they need anything and to assure them to not be afraid to ask for help.

However, Colleen who had been there for four years, indicated that she was thrown into the culture of the school without any formal induction. Her introduction to the professional culture of the school was mostly informal. She was a recent graduate and she was working as a substitute teacher within the school division. She noted that she had worked in the school a few days before taking over the classroom on a full time basis. She reported:

> I would say that I wasn't [inducted]. It was more so just getting thrown into it.
> When I came into this school I was taking over a medical leave, it was in
> November in the middle of the week I had subbed here a couple days before. The
> teacher before had left nothing and [I] never taught grade seven before and I think
> I was shown to my classroom and it was like a sink or swim type of situation and

I was lucky that at that time it was grade seven and there were three full grade

seven classes.

Colleen noted that she struggled to understand the what was going on with subject

switches and basically everything. Consequently, she and another grade seven teacher

made their own informal induction and support mentorship program. It was this other

grade seven teacher who took her under her wing and helped her. She acknowledged that

this action definitely saved her from becoming overwhelmed.

Mark, who had been an administrator at ValleyView for four years, reflected that

he found out that he was coming to this school in May. Then he took a half day to a full

day in order to meet with the outgoing principal to discuss some of the major factors

influencing the culture of the school. This could include the budget, what they have been

working on in terms of school goals, staffing issues, academic concerns, how they run

staff meetings and general routines of the school. The goal of this meeting to help

establish some continuity between the outgoing and incoming principal. Mark

emphasized:

> The culture piece for me is that I probably was that guy, not the whole first year,
>
> but you certainly are going to take some time to watch a little bit. And what I
>
> found, and somebody explained it to me this way, if you walk into a room and
>
> you can see something right in your face that is blocking your vision that is that
>
> thing you are going to take care of first. You might also see something down here
>
> that is not as pertinent, not as, it's still something you might want to change but
>
> maybe you can live with it for the first six months or year or whatever.

Mark admitted that there was potential for some hiccups in the first year but he did think that 'whatever happens when you are in a building for a least three to five years, you are able to build that relationship'. Mark concluded by commenting on the belief that the key to just about every change, 'every move is that you have to able to trust a person. You need to be able to know that there is no ulterior motive to sit down and talk about teaching other than to see if we can help'. Mark referred to the importance of having this spirit of trust, of being collegial with each other. He noted that he would be a defender if needed but he was also going to be a point of pressure 'if you need a kick in the rear end or a nudge to get you back on track'. That was the relationship that he believed you have to be able to navigate and hopefully trust people well enough to know that is the spirit of what you are trying to do.

Perceived Impacts of the Professional Leadership Culture

On Student Learning

The second research question that guided this study elicited participant perceptions regarding the relationship between the professional leadership culture and student learning. For the purposes for this research, I characterized that relationship in terms of an assessment of the *impacts* of each facet of the professional leadership culture on student learning. Specifically, I present the perceptions of professionals regarding the impact of four elements of the professional leadership culture on student learning at this school. As mentioned previously, data were coded and analyzed using Saldana's (2013) Codes-to-Theory Model. Further analysis was completed from the use of NVIVO 11, combined with my interpretation of the data through my reading of the participant transcripts. Categories were determined by their frequency of identification within the

interview transcripts, and by their identification by all, or majority of, the participants. For the determination of a majority, at least three educators needed to have identified the same common category within their interviews. These four elements are: *shared leadership, administrative leadership, professional collaboration,* and *decision-making practices.* Finally, I present a synthesis of *ideal leadership practices to improve student learning.*

Impact of Shared Leadership on Student Learning

The majority of teachers talked about shared leadership in the form of co-teaching as a major influence on student learning. Gwen connected the practice of planning together as a key connection to student learning, she stated:

> Just by planning together you get some different ideas, you get to, I mean things I have done somebody else tries, works, doesn't work, you can do different things. So it's, it's a good model for our student learning but then it's also a richer experience because there's several heads put together on one topic.

She further observed that professionals at ValleyView exert their influence on student learning by modelling working together by affirming:

> One way is that they view us working as a team and that it's good teamwork skills for them. The other way I'm taking this is that they get a richer education because it's not just my brain that produced the social science units, it's all three of our brains that produced it.

In short, Gwen noted that one strong way to improve student learning was through a culture of collaboration amongst professionals.

Colleen observed that everything was focused and driven towards improving the student learning environment. She noted:

> It is always reiterated after we do a professional development day or we have a planning day at our school, or we just collaborate and discuss in a staff meeting. It's always looped back around and how it affects student learning.

So she seemed to believe that everything they did as a staff had a main goal – to have a transparent focus on learning. This was achieved in part through a constant return to the question" 'How is this helping our students?'

Colleen also commented on collaboration among professionals as a means of helping students. She characterized it as allowing individual teachers to being exposed to different teaching strategies and styles and respecting everyone. She noted that it was not a cookie-cutter type where admin was trying to make everyone all that same teacher. Instead the administration seemed to focus on looking at the 'difference' as opposed to the 'sameness'. She stated:

> They embrace our differences and I guess not every teacher would be open minded, some are set in their ways and those teachers just choose not to openly collaborate, as far as I'm concerned I look at each teacher with an open mind. So I get exposed and introduced to so many different strategies that my students would benefit from.

Colleen commented that she thought that teachers seeing teachers or students seeing teachers collaborate helped as it assisted in modelling the learning environment and this in turn encouraged students to collaborate that way. Colleen reflected the belief that this relayed a strong message to students that they can learn from each other, they can learn

from administration, they can learn from other teachers, and that it was not just an isolated student-teacher classroom environment.

Jill and Karen arrived at a similar understanding about the importance of collaboration as a means to influence student learning. Jill referred to co-teaching as crucial when she described of the interchange between teachers with different personalities and strong points, but adding that in turn this benefited the students. She declared, "honestly in just having two teachers in a room even if it's a lot of kids, wow, the impact it has on student learning, I think student behaviour, student outcomes, it is through the roof". Jill noted that if you are doing co-teaching properly, it should be a direct correlation to student learning. She reflected on the belief that this was their whole purpose, the grade-alike meetings, the mentorship, the collaborative inquiry teams - was having a targeted goal, communicating that goal and then working towards it. Then afterwards, the most important part was to look at the after and see what worked and what didn't.

Karen echoed those thoughts by affirming that the sharing of leadership between teachers and administration had an influence on student learning. She stated, "Well I think it's an everybody wins situation". She commented on her belief that the teacher's skills became more specialized because of the impact of a supportive environment. Karen noted the fact that they had support and in doing so, they were able to deliver better programs. She reflected the thought that they were just able to offer more instructional strategies, better ways of assessment, and consequently, they had better assessments, their instruction was more focused and more individualized to what students needed.

Karen elaborated more on her belief in support as it pertained to having an influence on learning. She noted that she felt that it was an invitation that was risk free and that was really key because sometimes directives came down from either the division level or the school level that actually restricted creativity, but she did not feel that here at all. Karen felt like they were encouraged to try new things and encouraged to take some risks. She noted that it was okay if they made a mistake, as she felt like there was enough trust there and that the administration has got their back if trouble arose. Karen reflected on her belief that "the principal is not my pal like not a principal, not like a friend per say, well he is, but he's somebody who I can chat with honestly and the door is always open". She noted that she considered that to be a big thing, to be able to communicate with your boss in that manner and be honest and be able to trust, she affirmed; "I think that helps building relationships, asking for resources and those types of things". She commented on the belief that if she really needed some administrative support that she would have that support from them. All the other participants shared the similar view, they all commented on the belief that if a teacher was having classroom issues, behavioural issues or needed some instructional support, the administrative team was extremely approachable and supportive.

The principal interview reflected similar themes. Mark observed that having some form of shared leadership did impact learning as it provided a means for more effectively capitalizing on home support. He highlighted literacy levels regarding the impact of innovative thinking on teaching/learning and student engagement, he affirmed; "Parents here I believe value the outcomes of school and would do their part to, as I said, maybe give their kid a kick in the rear end if they weren't studying hard enough." Consequently,

Mark held the belief that culture is permeated between the school and home and that the culture of expectations in this building was that students came here ready to learn. He expressed the belief that as professionals, they needed to get that culture and that they were working hard on specific instructional practices. He affirmed:

> This means that we aren't all just doing the same thing, like standing at the front of the room and talking to kids. Instead this means that we have active engaged learners and sometimes they learn from each other just as, or more meaningful than a teacher giving a direct instruction lesson.

Ultimately, he found that this new way of instruction was sometimes tough for people to get their head around compared to when they went to school and it was it was just accepted as the correct way of doing things. However, he commented:

> … those are the things we can work on, we don't expect them to come like that, but it's the culture piece right from the very start that is crucial as we build relationships with parents, we talk about what is happening in schools.

Mark commented on the belief that strong and caring relationships with all stakeholders helped students to achieve well at all grade levels.

> Mark observed that there were lots of positive things happening, he affirmed:
>
> I guess I would say we take advantage of that here as teachers. We take that good support at home and it is a really cool place to try something new because there are lots of good things going on already.

He elaborated that lots of things were way more pertinent here which could be part of their rapport and that was where their culture of instructional practice fitted in, by reflecting on it. In the end, he concluded by commenting on the belief that culture was

permeated between the school and home. The culture in this building was that students came here ready to learn and that their parents supported that endeavor.

Impact of Administrative Leadership on Learning

One teacher commented on the belief that she thought that she did not know if administration impacted actual learning of students. Jill noted that she thought that it was more of an impact of student behaviour. Jill stated:

> This entailed the choices that students made at recess, in the actual building or the park. If they did not have a bond with administration or if they did not know them, then they were told to be a certain way and they did not respond. Or they may have used it as a form of rebellion, especially if they had a bad experience with the principal, they will take it out on the playground or do something in the school to show that they were mad at the administrative team.

Jill reflected the belief that she thought it was very important 'they get to know the kids and it is not just to give them shit'.

The majority of the teachers held the belief that administrative leadership did have an indirect impact on student learning in the form of teaching support by giving teachers their approval, supporting them, and encouraging them to become better. Karen found this to be true, that by encouraging her to be to be a life-long learner, by encouraging her to get better at her teaching practices, she felt that the school administrators helped her to become a better educator. She stated, "To learn different instructional strategies, more effective strategies whether it be through the math community or all those kinds of supports they encourage us to go out and seek, those supports". She found that in doing this, 'you build up your staff and you are going to have improved student achievement.

120

The stronger your staff, the stronger your team'. Karen acknowledged that there was a lot of effort that went into building up the teaching team.

Colleen shared a similar belief centered around the theme of support. She observed:

> I guess dealing and helping support teachers if you are having classroom management issues or behavioural issues with a specific student. They are more than willing to deal with that one student so the 29 other students can continue the task at hand. So they are supportive that way, if there are one or two kids taking away from that learning opportunity they would rather have the majority of them learning and one dealing with or them dealing with than everyone's learning opportunity being taken away.

Colleen added that the impact of administrative leadership also came in giving teachers the freedom to do their own thing and to plan their own lessons. They were always available to listen and bounce ideas off of them with the focus being on why were you doing that and what was it connected to.

From a formal leadership viewpoint, Mark noted the importance in supporting teachers and stressed that the impact of administrative leadership on learning came in the form of creating ways of establishing leaders in the classrooms. He added the need to support teaching practices and to clarify the administration's role in enhancing learning. He noted that he was not in the classroom anymore as he was a full time administrator but when he was covering for a teacher or doing some observations, it was about being in classrooms enough to be able to appreciate the prevailing culture in a classroom. Mark elaborated:

What do I see on the walls? What do I get from kid's responses when I ask how are they doing? What can they do? What do they do if they're stuck? What do you do if you can't answer this question? What systems are in place in that classroom? Is it turn to a neighbor? The structure of the room, are we in rows or tables?

He added "That's kind of my take on things that I can do to support those practices that lead. I do think good teaching is inherently supportive of good learning". Ultimately, he held the view that his impact came in the form as one who addressed the barriers and removed the obstacles to teaching and learning.

Mark also reflected the belief that good teaching may look very different depending on the community. Consequently, he noted that as a principal, he or she needed to recognize what that looks like learning for kids at that type of school. He declared:

So for us, my role in terms of an instructional leader is to say 'what do these kids come with? What barriers do we still see in the classroom that prevent him from doing his job to the best of his abilities every day?' And if its resource, he doesn't have the resources to do this history lesson I'm going to help him.

Mark reflected the belief that his job was to remove barriers. He commented on the belief that one of his responsibilities was make sure that there are structures in place, like collaborative inquiry teams, in order to support instruction. He commented that he understood that the job of teaching has changed greatly and that many may not be super willing to come out and say "Here's what I think I'm good at but here's what I think I need work on" because the job has changed so much. Indeed, he acknowledged the fact that some teachers were just trying to keep their heads above water and that many would

be reluctant to admit that they needed support and that they needed to work further to implement all the changes in curriculum, assessment, and instructional strategies. Consequently, his view of the role of administrative leadership in student learning was to support that change but that he always wanted to make sure that he removed any barriers that may be affecting student learning. For example, he noted that sometimes it might be a student, he stated:

> I'm not saying we would remove the student but how do we work with that student who is defiant, disrespectful? How do we support their family and help him or her with poor behaviour choices so that those other 24 kids that the teacher is also in charge of...he's not hijacking instruction or she's not hijacking instruction in there?

He summarized that this approach was his oversimplified answer but that basically his job was to remove barriers from the teachers, the environment, the classroom, or himself. He elaborated on the notion that he recognized that sometimes it was himself putting barriers up and that he has to catch that before he puts something in front of teachers. He concluded on the belief that his impact as an administrative leader was to remove the barriers that do not allow people to fulfill their job or to be the best that they could be.

Impact of Professional Collaboration on Learning

All of the participants agreed that teacher collaboration on learning was related to having the opportunity to share. A main example of the impact of teacher collaboration around learning came in the form developing strategies focused on improving student learning. Gwen found that that they used some of the same reading strategies that they had developed. Thus they were all teaching the same type of reading strategy. Celia noted

the importance of being able to rely on other teachers' expertise in solving problems. She stated: "Well I know my cohorts have expertise in different areas that I don't have and then I have expertise in different areas." Colleen echoed that point when she noted that there were times when she had been struggling with a student who was trying to grasp a math concept. She bounced an idea off another grade eight or seven teacher and they suggested giving this method a try or trying a different approach…. and by following that advice, she and the student had success.

 Jill summed up the observations of this group as one which emphasized the importance of helping each other and discussing 'what worked for you and what did not work for you'. She also added that it was also about relationships and how to handle kids, she affirmed; "It's not just one formula, you have to know about them. But yeah we definitely talk about and it's not just grade-alike". She noted that as a group, they were always trying to figure things out for the betterment of the kids.

Mark also arrived at a similar conclusion mentioning the use of the picture world induction model where teachers used this model in innovative ways to enhance their teaching. Another example that he provided was with "wall walks" in which the purpose was to go into other classrooms, not just your own grade and ask questions such as, "how do you use this? Why is this anchor chart up here? What's the physical environment of the room?" which all were aimed at having an increased dialogue about teaching and one where teachers capitalized on the special skills and knowledge of colleagues.

The majority of teachers reflected the belief that it was when the administrators collaborated amongst themselves this in turn led to offering more support to teachers. For example, Gwen stated:

I think when they collaborate they're just trying to bring it back to us so that, so

we can, so they can focus us on what we want to do and what our focus should be.

And so it comes down I mean it just trickles down to affecting the student

learning. Because they are looking at stuff and saying 'oh yeah this is what we

need to do' and then they bring it back to you.

Karen noted the added value of collaboration in identifying students support needs,

whether that be through team meetings in the school or through data. Jill agreed with the

others in having the opportunity to share, she affirmed; "So having that opportunity to

share, like if we're looking just at data 'what works for you, what didn't work, try this'.

It's always helping each other, giving ideas and strategies.". She also added that it is also

about forming relationships and knowing how to handle kids. She noted that there is not

one formula, but you have to get to know them in order to build a good relationship.

Mark mentioned the importance in the relaying of system context and practices

with their 'leadership for learning' model where they as administrators had some time to

talk and build relationships with other professionals about providing supports to help

those struggling learners. He also emphasized the payoff that comes from tapping into

teacher expertise as an overall means of improving student learning. Mark noted that

teachers are on the front line in regard to working with their student's day after day and

consequently they are the experts in recognizing where their students are struggling.

Mark stated, "Teachers can look at data and say 'ah hah, this is pretty good. We're

obviously doing good at: reading comprehension with my students this year'". He

commented on the belief that his responsibility as a leader was to offer support for those

teachers and students in whatever way that they may need in order to improve. He

concluded by noting the impact of the administrative teamwork on learning by citing the example of walk-throughs as a means of monitoring, of a need to want to monitor student success, and helping to establish better communication between everyone involved.

Two teachers mentioned the idea that administrator collaboration does not directly affect student learning. Celia observed that for them, the administrative focus is establishing a sense of community and that what they do is more for tone of the school, sense of community, and health as a whole. She referred to doing a math night, but that this doesn't affect student learning. She asserted:

> But it creates the, I know why they do it, they do it because it creates the look of we are high achievers, we are a group of people who care about math, do fun work in math and they want that to go out to the community.

Celia noted "this is not student learning; it is just a sense of who we are".

Colleen concurred on the impact of administrator collaboration on learning; she affirmed, "I feel like that influences student learning a lot less than when I collaborate with my colleagues". She commented on the belief that it was a lot more beneficial for her to hear from another teacher about what strategies she tried and how they worked in the classroom. She noted that with the administration, their approach was to provide research and to 'allow us to take it as we please'.

Impact of Decision-Making Practices on Learning

Three teachers reported that any impact of decision making on learning came from listening to the various voices (parent, student, community, etc.). Two teachers reflected on what the data was revealing as to its impact on making decisions. In terms of considering the viewpoints of other voices, Gwen stated; "I'd say there's some, I mean at

times obviously there is top down and sometimes it's a student voice. So I'd say we had a wide range at our school". She added that as a staff they have listened to parents, and an example might be the new 'nutrition positive' approach that they wanted in the school and that is what they promoted. However, she did note that if teachers listened exclusively to the kids, they would have vending machines as well, so she admitted that they listen to a lot of voices in making a wide range of decisions.

Karen discussed the role that data played in making decisions. She asserted:

Yeah I really feel that we're very data driven, both the division and school level. And I think that, it might not be Mark saying 'yeah let's work on writing this year', he's going to look at the data and the data is going to dive what the focus is at the school level. And then within that once the focus is decided then it becomes a priority with teachers and with parents. And then I think it's going to influence student learning because it becomes a focus and anytime you have something that becomes a focus after given an amount of time you need to see the improvement after trying new things.

Celia arrived at a similar conclusion by affirming that when they were making decisions, they were always looking at data. This also means that they were collaborating. They looked at the data in front of them and what they knew about their student learning according to those academic tests and interpreted the results together in order to make a decision about what needed to happen next.

From a leadership point of view, Mark acknowledged that some decisions were made from a division or ministerial level in which school professionals have little to no control or input. However, he highlighted the individual versus collaborative tensions

across the professional group. He found that this was collaboration because we come back to that model of a grade-alike partner; he affirmed:

> I mean it should be all grade eights so we are more of a team in that regard then we are, you know, you get to your own thing in your class and I do my own thing in mine. That doesn't help us. So some of those pieces are collaborative in terms of our instructional pieces.

He emphasized the point that opportunities for learning should be equitable in both classrooms.

He also added his philosophy of classrooms being student rather than teacher-focused. He found that by having teachers collaborate, it does help in terms of instructional consistency and it extends ownership of those students where 'they are all of our kids as opposed to this teacher's kids'. By having this in place, he concluded that this allowed teachers to support some stronger engagement in student learning in those classrooms.

Ideal Leadership Practices to Improve Student Learning

Teachers at ValleyView concurred as to the presence of a clear connection between the elements of the professional leadership culture of the school and student learning. From the coding process involving NVIVO 11 and my initial interpretations of participants voices, particpants indicated that the ideal leadership practices to improve student learning were *communication, flexibility, support, and attention to student voice.*

Communication

All of the teachers expressed the belief that good communication between teachers and administration helped to impact student learning. Jill and Karen all reported

on the importance of communication and how if differed for each individual. Jill noted on the centrality of communication:

> They have to hear about you know it's the top-down thing like what downtown wants and then by admin working with us teachers they should be giving us their perspective on this and then help kind of guide to make sure those goals or those directions are followed. But some admin are better at communicating than others so it just depends on the person.

Karen added that she would like to see her leadership pay more attention to teacher comfort levels by gathering information in different ways from staff members and not catering to the extroverts. She acknowledged that sometimes people did not feel comfortable sharing in a large group and that sometimes there were other ways to gather data with the staff. Celia noted the importance of working together, making a goal, and having the administration help them in whatever way was possible. Gwen agreed when she reflected the belief that by working with administration, you can figure out some of those kind of things.

Colleen was somewhat of a dissenting voice in this area. While she did agree that administration might be beneficial in terms of collaborating on some kind of communication like forwarding an email, but actually sitting down or doing some team working are examples where she did not believe that these types of collaboration actually impacted learning other than having to do with more rules and regulations.

Mark also echoed the value of communication and having the structure in place that fosters good communication between everyone, he stated:

But the piece of student learning I hope that improves in that they see it's not just their teacher talking to them, it's their principal, their EA. Lots of times you'll hear parents at the end of the day, we get quite a few here at the end of the day particularly in our primary end. There's a whole group of 30 or 40 moms and dads kind of at the end of the day outside the grade one room. First thing, 'How was your day? How are you doing' like, it's a bit of a connection I hope. There are a few adults in here concerned about their wellbeing and that extends to home. They might see it as a common goal for home and school. They might see it, again we like it when kids can go home and be the messengers of good learning going on in the classroom. Far better message coming from kids than it is from the teacher saying 'well here's how I'm doing well.' The best people that'd be talked to some students and say 'here's what I really like about my classroom and what I like about my teachers and what I think about my school' and they may or may not know some of it is because of what myself do or the work that goes on behind the scene and putting that out there for teachers as well.

He commented that he doesn't think students know or will make the connection that collaborative inquiry team meetings are a result of our school division and the work in our schools. However, he suggested that the impact of teacher and administration on student learning came from talking in and out of these collaborative inquiry teams.

Flexibility

The majority of teachers commented on the concept of flexibility in terms of having more time to collaborate as an ideal practice that helps to improve student learning. Jill found that with their staff meeting, the administration tried to dedicate one

day a month for collaborative inquiry team meetings, but it doesn't always work out that way. She added that she would like to see more time for collaboration and having more flexibility by using shared leadership in regard to their professional development time by giving teachers time to meet rather than just sitting and listening to lecture style or information that could be communicated via email.

Celia seemed to believe that things need to be less structured with an emphasis on flexibility and being a lot more open. She affirmed:

I think it would look like a free for all. I think they would just say 'go. Do it. Do whatever you need to do right now'. So I think it would look really a lot more open, I think there would be a lot more time, I think they would allow us to do whatever we need to. Right now I feel like it's too narrowed down, it's too specific.

She seemed to believe that they needed a lot more flexibility and not to be tied to their collaborative inquiry team framework or what was being mandated by the division.

Support

Throughout their comments when they were talking about a variety of subjects, the concept of support was an important consideration. Gwen commented on keeping numbers down in the classrooms, more straight grades and to let the administration deal with all the extra paperwork and stuff that they have to do in order to just let them teach. She seemed to believe that if you could take that away, the learning of students would go up.

Colleen seemed to agree on the provision of wanting more time to collaborate as a form of support; she stated:

We always talk about wanting just more time to collaborate and I think it's a bit

disappointing for this school that we don't capitalize on the opportunity that we

have so many teachers in this staff. But again it's a busy school, everyone has

their own schedule, things that they are doing before and after school. It can just

be a bit of a rat race some weeks so I'm not sure how to slow things down and let

more teachers collaborate but I think for me I would love to spend time, just more

time with the other teachers within this school, even if they're not teaching the

same grade and highlighting some of their strengths.

However, she seemed to disagree about the need to be more flexible. She reflected the

belief that things need to be structured, she affirmed:

We do a lot of things that I think have a good, the intentions are good where we'll

at a staff meeting walk from or spend time checking out other teachers'

classrooms and kind of doing a wall walk and looking at what they have up and

why they have that. The idea is good but most people will pop into two rooms, not

ask a question, kind of roll their eyes, it's a waste of time and I don't feel any

learning actually comes from it. So if things are just structured more. I think we

get a lot of professional development opportunities but I also feel though that we

don't utilize them because sometimes it's a lot harder to not be here than it is to be

here. If you miss a day of emails, you come back from a PD with just more of a

headache.

Colleen concluded that she had no idea how to fix that or if there existed a miracle to fix

that problem, but she reflected on the belief that there were a lot of opportunities that

teachers were missing out on that could benefit and have an impact on student learning because it is easier to not go to them.

> Mark reflected the belief that he as a leader has to support teachers. He asserted: It's commitment to that I guess and I think support for teachers that struggle or have hurdles with any of the above. That's our job as leaders. If you go down a level, teachers support for students that have any of those like a commitment, a belief that I will do my darndest o help out the little person over here struggling with. If it's not me, I'll get them help from resource and if it's not resource I'll get them some help from other agencies that are in the school. If it's not there I'll meet with parents to talk about, like a team approach to interventions.

He concluded by commenting that they as administrators and teachers will follow that model in order to see what they can do to support all students. This was reflected in his patterns of behaviour that related to the professional leadership culture perceived to exist within his school.

Attention to Student Voice

From an administrator perspective, Mark focused on having strong relationships and recognizing that every student has a voice. He declared, "One, strong relationship opportunities. Kids have a voice, even little grade one kids and kindergarten can have some sort of ownership of the school". He noted that students need to feel that they need to have some opportunities to show leadership by having a voice which in turn helps to build relationships. He commented that this is their building not just a place to go because they are bound by the rules in the classroom.

He added that focused instruction and being data 'savy' impacts student learning; he affirmed; "Teachers can look at data and say ah hah, this is pretty good. We're obviously doing really good at: reading comprehension with my students this year". He commented on the belief that the school division looks at data quite a bit, but that having a knowledge as well as a practice of those positive instructional, diversified or differentiated instruction strategies helps to build relationships by considering the needs of the students by listening to their voices.

Summary of Chapter Four

At the time of this study, the school organization was a large urban system operating over fifty schools. It served approximately 21, 000 students employing a professional and support staff of over 2000 individuals. The school was an elementary school, staffed with 29 full-time teachers, six educational associates, one half-time library technician, one vice principal, and one principal. ValleyView had a culturally diverse student population.

The observations of professional activities within the school involved a large proportion of the teaching and administrative professionals, and the participants selected for in-depth interviews had, on average, about ten years of total teaching experience and represented a variety of grade levels and professional roles within the school. The principal of the school had worked his entire career with this one school division. He had 17 years of administrative leadership in which 13 years were as a principal within four different schools.

This chapter was presented in two sections dealing first with the perceived nature of the prevailing professional leadership culture of the school, and second with the

perceived impacts of that culture upon student learning. The findings emerging from these broad questions are summarized below.

The Perceived Nature of the Leadership Culture

 Individuals involved in this study talked exclusively about leadership as a group phenomenon, not an individual phenomenon. In fact, by far the most pronounced and frequent **representations of the professional leadership culture** among the participating professionals were: *the pervasiveness of collaboration* among professionals, *a culture of trust*, and *a feeling of being supported*. It was apparent that collaborative activity, a climate of trust, and priority given to professional support had, over time, become significantly embedded in the culture of the school.

Several **artifacts representing leadership as a shared value** were referred to frequently by participants as common activities and mechanisms which facilitated the professional leadership culture, and which created an environment in which leadership was a shared value among professionals in the school. The three cultural artifacts which were most prominent in teacher comments and in the interactions that I observed included: *team meetings and grade-alike groups, transparent formal and informal collaborative structures,* and *a collective focus on student learning.*

The *formal gatherings* of teachers for the purpose of improving instruction and student learning had become a natural and indispensable practice among the professionals, especially in reference to their team meetings and grade-alike groups. It was apparent that the valuing of team deliberation did not occur by accident, and that it was the product of a groundwork for collaboration that had been established through the initiation of formal and informal opportunities at the school and school system levels.

135

Most of the professionals commented on their belief in being committed to supporting student learning through *multiple activities* which included sharing within professional collaborative committees, reviewing school data, and having conversations about various instructional strategies to address student weaknesses in order to improve student learning.

For the teachers at ValleyView School, there was a deeply rooted concern for **building capacity among the professional staff** in engaging with each other. Most commonly they identified *intervisitation*, *'critical' friends, mentorship and sharing expertise,* and *shared leadership among professionals* as opportunities for building leadership capacity at ValleyView School. All the participants appreciated having the opportunity to develop their expertise by working in an environment where everyone learns. The intervisitation initiative came in the form of be being able to visit and observe other classrooms and to establish a network of critical friends which allowed them to share expertise which in turn helped to build professional capacity and commitment.

Leadership among professionals was apparent in mentorship activities with, for example, new staff members, particular students in the school, and students from the university. Participants seemed to reflect the belief that being a mentor allowed them to show leadership to the other teachers and 'teachers in training' by sharing resources and structuring their planning time as a means to assist other professionals.

Participants in this study had their viewpoints on **the formal administrative leadership** of this school as an integral part of the professional leadership culture. The teachers viewed the most critical aspects of the work of their administrative team as centering around three key activities: *leadership role extension*, *a focus on instructional*

development, and *communicating what matters*. Leadership role extension was evident in administrators who demonstrated leadership beyond their day-to-day formal leadership role through such activities as helping to organize extra-curricular activities, enabling collaboration by giving teachers days to observe other professionals, and by finding out what teachers needed in regard to resources. The majority of teachers were keenly aware of an administrative focus on instructional development constantly bringing research on best practices to the staff in an attempt to enhance their professional learning. Finally, all the teachers agreed that the quality of communication on the part of the formal leadership team provided ValleyView with a firm basis for its professional leadership culture.

An important part of the presence and sustainability of the professional leadership culture of this school was perceived to be the **culture of induction and mentorship**. In other words, how new staff members were introduced and mentored into their new roles. This came in the form of formal introductions to the culture of the school through discussions and separate meetings with the administration to less formal means such as being paired up with a mentor who would guide them through understanding the various artifacts, beliefs, and values and underlying assumptions that formed the professional leadership culture at ValleyView.

The Perceived Impacts of the Professional Leadership Culture on Student Learning

The major representations of professional leadership culture at ValleyView were: *shared leadership, administrative leadership, teacher collaboration, administrative collaboration, and decision-making practices***.**

For a majority of teachers, the practice of **shared leadership** in the form of co-teaching was a major influence on student learning. Teachers at this school exerted their

influence on student learning by modelling working together. In other words, they believed that one strong way to improve student learning was through collaboration. One mantra that seemed to be important for these teachers as a staff when examining or discussing the viability of a new practice was to consider the question how was this helping our students.

Teachers also agreed that **administrative leadership** which focused on the sharing of leadership between teachers and administration also had an influence, albeit an indirect one, on student learning at ValleyView. Many believed that this existed because of the impact of a supportive environment. In fact, there was an agreement of the need for support as it pertains to student learning. Teachers expressed an appreciation for an environment that is risk free, that respects the autonomy of teachers, and that maximizes creativity. Particularly the administration talked about the importance of collaboration with the home as an important though indirect influence on student learning.

All the participants agreed that **teacher collaboration** on learning was related to having the opportunity to share. This took the form of being able to help each other and to rely on each other's expertise regarding developing strategies focused on improving student learning.

Messages for formal leadership as an influence on student learning included **administrative collaboration**, where the majority of teachers commented on their belief that when administrators collaborated amongst themselves, this in turn led to offering more support for teachers. Thus administrative collaboration contributed to providing teacher support in the forms of being more visible, the removal of barriers to effective

instruction, and the identification and discussion of the innovative ways to enhance teaching.

In the area of student relations all participants gave priority to having mechanisms for identifying student support needs through support meetings and having the opportunity to share and being flexible. The connection to the system administration was also deemed to be important as a support particularly when dealing with students who were struggling. Instructional development and teacher growth was a priority particularly for administration. The principal in this school frequently reiterated his belief that the role of a leader was to offer support for teachers and students in whatever way that they may need in order to improve. The role of formal leadership was viewed from the perspective of the formal leader as an indirect influence on learning where the principal/vice-principal made the most significant impact by facilitating the work of every professional in working with students and also with each other, facilitating the work of teachers and in the longer term creating the professional leadership capacity among all the professionals to enhance student learning through collective efforts.

The professionals at this school also discussed the **impact of decision making** particularly around the use of data in terms of helping individual needs, interpreting results, deciding what needs to happen next. The impact of decision making came from listening to the various voices (parent, student, community, etc.) and by identifying what they have control over and what decisions are made at the school division and ministerial level over which they have little control or input. The feelings amongst teachers and the administration around the leadership philosophy is one that should be learner-focused

rather than teacher-focused, and a collective mentality across the school that says 'these are *our* rather than *my* students'.

Finally, in reviewing the ideal practices emerging from this study, teachers identified four broad practices: *communication, flexibility, support,* and *attention to student voice*. All the participants expressed the belief that good *communication* between teachers and administration helped to positively impact student learning. *Flexibility* in terms of having less structures and placing more emphasis on establishing time to collaborate was another ideal practice for professionals. The *feeling of support* was also an important consideration for the professionals at this school, through such actions as paying attention to the impacts of pupil-teacher ratio, and reducing the burden of paperwork on teachers. Recognizing the overall importance of the *listening to t*he *student voice* was 'deemed to be crucial'. Though it was not considered as part of this study, it nevertheless remains an important dimension of the leadership culture of any school. According to some of the professionals in this school, students need to feel that they have some opportunities to show leadership by adding their voice to the discussions around their learning.

Ultimately, the overwhelming theme from this research appeared to resonate around the notion of a culture of interdependence. This theme seemed to be reflected in the belief from the participants that no one person can single handily change a culture nor improve student learning to a large extent. Instead the perceptions of the participants seemed to reflect the belief that, through forming collaborative partnerships with a shared focus on improving student learning, the opportunities for student learning will be maximized.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings conclusions and implications for theory, practice and future research are also presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, CULTURAL ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this case study was to examine the perceptions of school-level professionals regarding the nature of the professional leadership culture and its perceived relationship to student learning in one school. In this final chapter, four main conclusions arising from this study are presented, following which a cultural analysis based upon the conceptual framework developed by Schein and illustrated in chapter two is provided. This includes a revisitation to Schein's model based upon the culture and subcultures as they emerged in the study. A discussion of the major findings is provided as they pertain to the literature described in chapter two. Following which the implications for theory, policy, practice, research and further study are presented, as well as brief concluding statement.

In this case study, I examined the perceptions of educational professionals. Participants were teachers (across grade levels) and one administrator. Two research questions guided this study:

1. What patterns relating to professional leadership culture are perceived by school level professionals to exist within their school?

2. What is the perceived relationship between this culture and student learning according to these professionals?

Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews and observations which elaborated on comments provided during the interview phase. In the previous chapter, I presented the study's categories that emerged during data analysis. As I discussed in

chapter three, the analysis and presentation of the data (based on Saldana's 2013 Codes-to-Theory Framework) consisted of my initial reading of the transcripts, generation of codes and categories (through the use of NVIVO 11), refinement of the catergories, evaluation of the data for adequacy, and in-depth reporting of participant voices according to categories. These five activities constituted chapter four, the presentation of data. In this chapter, the broader themes emerging from the disucion of categories from chapter four are identified and discussed. An in-depth discussion of themes in the forms of conclusions is also provided. The nature of this study as one that is directed by a mentality of exploration rather than one of proof needs to be emphaiszed. Therefore, it is in the spirit of exploration based upon my interpretations and my participants rich descriptions of their own interpretations of the school's culture that are at the heart of my findings. The following conclusions are presented with this caveat in mind.

Conclusions

From this study of the professional leadership culture and its relationship to student learning, four broad conclusions emerged as a result of my interpretations of the findings. These four conclusions related to the context of the professional leadership culture, the impact of the system and its vision, the key catalysts for professional leadership, and the impact of the professional leadership culture on student learning. These are elaborated below.

1. When the participants portrayed the professional leadership culture in this school, they gave emphasis to the presence of a culture of shared leadership within which collaborative activity was the predominant prerequisite and driver.

The professional leadership culture at ValleyView seemed to be characterized by a norm of shared leadership that took numerous forms that had a common emphasis on instructional improvement and student learning. From my observations, shared leadership was evident in team meetings on instructional issues, teacher sharing of expertise, the assumption of mentorship responsibilities toward newer and less experienced colleagues, taking a leadership role in reporting new ideas and instructional strategies from professional development experiences, serving as critical friends in the context of intervisitation, collaborative improvement teams, and grade-alike groups. It seemed that over time a professional culture had developed in which teachers were taking on different leadership roles in terms of the work they did with students outside of their classrooms. All participants noted that assuming some form of leadership role was important as they all emphasized the view that one person cannot do it all. However, at ValleyView formal administrative leadership played a significant role in the development of a culture of support within which professional leadership could flourish.

Though there were occasional tensions suggested by participants in relation to the nature of collaborative activity, it was frequently viewed by the participating professionals as the central factor in the development of the shared leadership culture. I found that it was evident in the context of professional work on planning and executing initiatives and projects, and that it typically focused on sharing ideas, resources, and helping other professionals learn new key concepts related to instruction. For me as a researcher, the effective use of collaboration was the most common representation of the professional leadership culture discussed by participants during interviews. It typically focused on sharing ideas, resources, and helping other professionals learn new key

144

concepts related to instruction. This is not to say that there was universal professional 'buy-in' to this norm of shared leadership through collaborative action. Two participants made the point that collaborative activity was not always the preferred choice, and that this was a choice that had to be respected.

2. It became evident that the presence of the school system exerted a pervaisive influence on the work of professionals in this school. It represented a conduit providing the underlying vision and the structure upon which school professionals collectively provided formal and informal leadership for learning.

Discussions with participants revealed that the school system exerted its presence as a major influence on the professional culture of the school in many ways: through the establishment of a guiding vision and clear expectations for all schools (including a focus on instructional improvement that was data based), through a collaboratively developed framework for leadership (leadership for learning model) that served as a guide for collective decision making and related professional action around improving learning and through a clear structure for committee work (e.g., collaborative inquiry teams, grade-alike groups). This system also exerted its influence through focused system wide professional development on leadership, through modelling for professional activity and mentorship, through enabling the practice of interschool and intraschool intervisitation among professionals, and through administrative leadership professional development. It was through these and other mechanisms that this system exerted a pervasive influence on the professional and instructional culture of its schools. This school was by no means an exception.

145

3. Support for professionals at this school was viewed by most participants as being an important driver for professional leadership accompanied by an enabling culture of trust, communication, and positive relationships. A core element of this support was facilitated by a feeling of trust among the professionals which in turn was enabled through constructive communication and building positive relationships.

Through the perceptions of the participants and my observations of their interactions with one another and their formal leadership team, there was evidence of a pervasive trust, and I interepreted this as a distinctive element of the professional leadership culture. The term was used frequently by participants. Trust was present in staff meetings and collaborative team meetings where participants had obviously become comfortable in expressing their viewpoints even where these were not in keeping with the general opinion; trust was present in such activities as walkthroughs and intervisitation where teachers were confident in allowing visitors to enter their classrooms and to engage them in discussions of issues related to instruction and student learning; trust was present in all interactions between professionals and formal leadership which from my experiences and the comments of teachers is the exception rather than the rule in schools generally.

Participants emphasized the quality of communication among the administrators, teachers, students, and parents. I felt that establishing effective communication practices was one of the strongest qualities discussed among teachers and administration as a means of positively impacting student learning. Participants typically described communication as requiring an emphasis on listening and speaking while working with

146

others. Indeed, there seemed to be a consistent preference for two-way communication as a means of promoting success in solving problems as a means of promoting success in solving problems.

I found it interesting that specific communication artifacts mirrored aspects of the school's professional culture. Teacher unit materials were shared between grade-alike teachers, ideas and professional resources were commonly brought forward from the teacher-librarian to the staff; the use of such mechanisms as class newsletters, Facebook pages, and exchange of emails were also common forms of communication, which as is likely the reality in most schools at this time.

The use of communication to promote a positive learning environment for improvement was an underlying assumption. Staff members were engaged in professional development projects that required their reflection and some learning of new instructional strategies aimed at improving student learning. Participants reported that clear, open communication was crucial as it aided them in focusing on what was happening within education, what to pay attention to in regard to students who were struggling, and what actions to take in order to improve student learning.

Positive relationships provided the opportunity to build networks among professionals in order for them to connect and reinterpret practice from outside and to reinvent practice within their school. I felt that collaborative inquiry teams enabled the establishment of a network of positive relationships providing a web of support for teacher growth, development, and interaction.

4. The overall evidence from my discussions and observations suggested to me that the professional leadership culture of the school had a critical, albeit

147

indirect, impact on student learning. Among partcipants, there was more agreement on this point than on any other.

Improving student learning was the ultimate goal of this school and school division. It was therefore not surprising to me that most participants talked about the belief around sharing leadership as a means of achieving this goal. With respect to improving student learning, they discussed how sharing leadership created a sense of empowerment at the individual level and decreased tensions between the individual and the group in attaining their goals. They commented on the belief that by sharing leadership in analyzing school data, it helped to facilitate deeper team thinking and learning as a means of explaining the "why" of developing action plans aimed at improving student learning.

With respect to improving student learning, I felt strongly that participants recognized that improving student learning required a 'team' effort in which everyone was trying to be a leader within the school, not just in their classroom. Many of the participants came from diverse backgrounds and they talked about their view that sharing leadership roles within various committees aided in building trust and respect amongst all the professionals. This was also strongly evident in my obseravtions.

In summary, my analysis of participant comments concerning the impact of *shared leadership* on learning revealed that they perceived shared leadership impacted student learning in three major ways: by increasing the collective focus on student learning; by modelling working together, (thereby increasing students' capacity to learn together); and by nurturing a culture of experimentation and risk-taking in the instructional environment. The single, most frequently expressed impact of

148

administrative leadership on student learning was, quite simply, its role in supporting

teachers to focus more effectively on student learning.

Beyond Schein: A Cultural Analysis and Reconceptualization

Schein observed that it is impossible to present any cultural analysis with total

objectivity. My analysis of the professional leadership culture at ValleyView was based

upon my subjective interpretations of the participants' representations, combined with my

observations. Upon reflection Schein's framework served me well in the presentation and

analsysis of participant voices in revealing the nature of each level of the professional

leadership culture. However, from a broader perspective the contexts of this organization

played a significant role that I had not anticipated from my use of Schein's framework. A

brief synthesis of cultural levels, and my conceptual reframing of Schein's model based

upon the unqiue context of this study is provided below. The first represents an extension

of my analysis represented in chapter four: the second constitutes my theoretical analysis

and reconceptualization of Schein's framework based on the context of this study.

A Synthesis of Cultural Levels From Participant Voices

Participants' descriptions of collaboration echoed aspects of the study's

conceptual framework, initially as illustrated by the broad levels of culture represented in

Schein's framework, namely: *artifacts*, *espoused beliefs* and *values,* and *underlying*

assumptions.

Artifacts

Numerous artifacts (both general and specific) emerged throughout this study as

representations and mechanisms associated with the professional leadership culture at

ValleyView. With respect to the overall mission of improving student learning, this was

evident in my observations of the various artifacts found within ValleyView. These included posters in common hallways that outlined the school's purpose, the strategic vision (social, personal, and cultural development) and goals (our student learning, our people, our organization, our community). Within the staff room artifacts included posters outlining the five step data team process as well as the Leadership for Learning model. Further visual artifacts in the form of learning strategies were found in the learning resource center which promoted posters emphasizing the connection to learning, thinking, and communicating: 'what am I learning; how am I doing; how do I know; how can I improve; what I need to do if I need help'.

Furthermore, the presence of a system-developed model of leadership for learning was an ever present artifact, serving as a visible representation and point of reference for system and school professional activity. At the school level, numerous structures such as grade-alike groups, collaborative inquiry teams, and other collective activities with a focus on student learning served as collaboratively developed mechanisms for collaborative activity. At the teacher level, collaborative practices such as intervisitation and critical friends allowed additional collective attention to student learning as did communication mechanisms which served as groundwork for teamwork deliberations. Mentorship and induction practices for the enculturation of new members emerged as common artifacts of the professional culture. At a more specific level participants used a reporting sheet as a guide for their discussions, decisions, and actions during their collaborative inquiry team meetings. Teachers collaborated on assessments by establishing rubrics as well as building thematic units of study together.

Beliefs

Shared beliefs were made evident in a variety of ways throughout the study: through the specific expressions of belief by participants on specific issues and through my interpretations of comments and my observations of professional interactions. First and foremost, there was a commonly espoused belief that a shared culture of instruction will benefit student learning. It seemed that at ValleyView, all other shared beliefs within the school's professional community flowed from this primary belief. Participants commented on their belief that by planning together you get some different ideas about things that somebody else tried, what worked, what doesn't work. This was evident in the use of interactive learning strategies which provided a guideline of resources that have proven by teachers to be effective and useful in the classroom. Planning came in the form of informal and formal conversations in such places as hallways, classrooms, and staff meetings. It seemed that having time to meet and collaborate was something that participants all cherished. Other beliefs that I found to be central to professional life in this school included the modeling shared leadership for other professionals, new professionals, and students; the sharing of expertise and mentoring of new members as a responsibility; a common belief in the potential of shared leadership to have a profound impact on the professional leadership culture; and a common belief that everyone should have a leadership voice.

Norms and Values

These professionals seemed to give priority to the sharing of expertise, the effectiveness of professional relationships, and the centrality of student learning in the work of professionals.

This process resulted in the identification of seven norms that seemed to resonate most with the professional leadership culture, these included:

- a norm of respect for informal collaboration;

- a norm of professional commitment that says, "We work hard when we are here";

- a norm of trust;

- a norm respect for differences of opinion;

- a norm of constant improvement; and

- a norm of continuous attention to building leadership capacity.

Underlying Assumptions

Reflecting on my engagement with professionals and their work with each other, I identified five underlying assumptions that seemed to govern their professional behaviours and perceptions. Two of these pertained to the *nature and focus of professional activity*. They were:

- that student learning is at the heart of all professional activity at ValleyView school;

- that both formal and informal collaborative activity are strongly viewed as essential for effective professional activity in the school.

Three *assumptions regarding leadership* were dominant in participant discussions of the leadership culture of their school. These were:

- That the quality of communication among professionals provides the groundwork for the professional leadership culture;

- That leadership activity is inherently multidimensional; and

152

- That leadership is at its best when it is guided by a shared vision.

Schein: A Reconceptualization

Schein's (2010) Organizational Culture Framework was used as the basis for this study and representations of the three levels of culture within his framework were reported in some depth by the participants. Individuals made reference to what they believed and valued as having an impact on their students' learning. Consequently, this lead me to believe that Schein's framework has merit as a model for analyzing school culture, as it was apparent throughout this study that the elements of culture articulated by Schein resonated powerfully with these school-level professionals. This in turn points to its usefulness in regard to the perceived relationship between culture and student learning. However, Schein depicts his model of organizational culture as a hierarchical one (2010, p. 29). I have come to view culture, in the context I studied, as a concept that is more fluid and interactive within a cyclical pattern. The cultural paradigm that emerged from my engagement with the professionals and their lives at ValleyView School (see Figure 5.1) illustrates the interdependence of conditions that foster improved student learning as it is connected to culture.
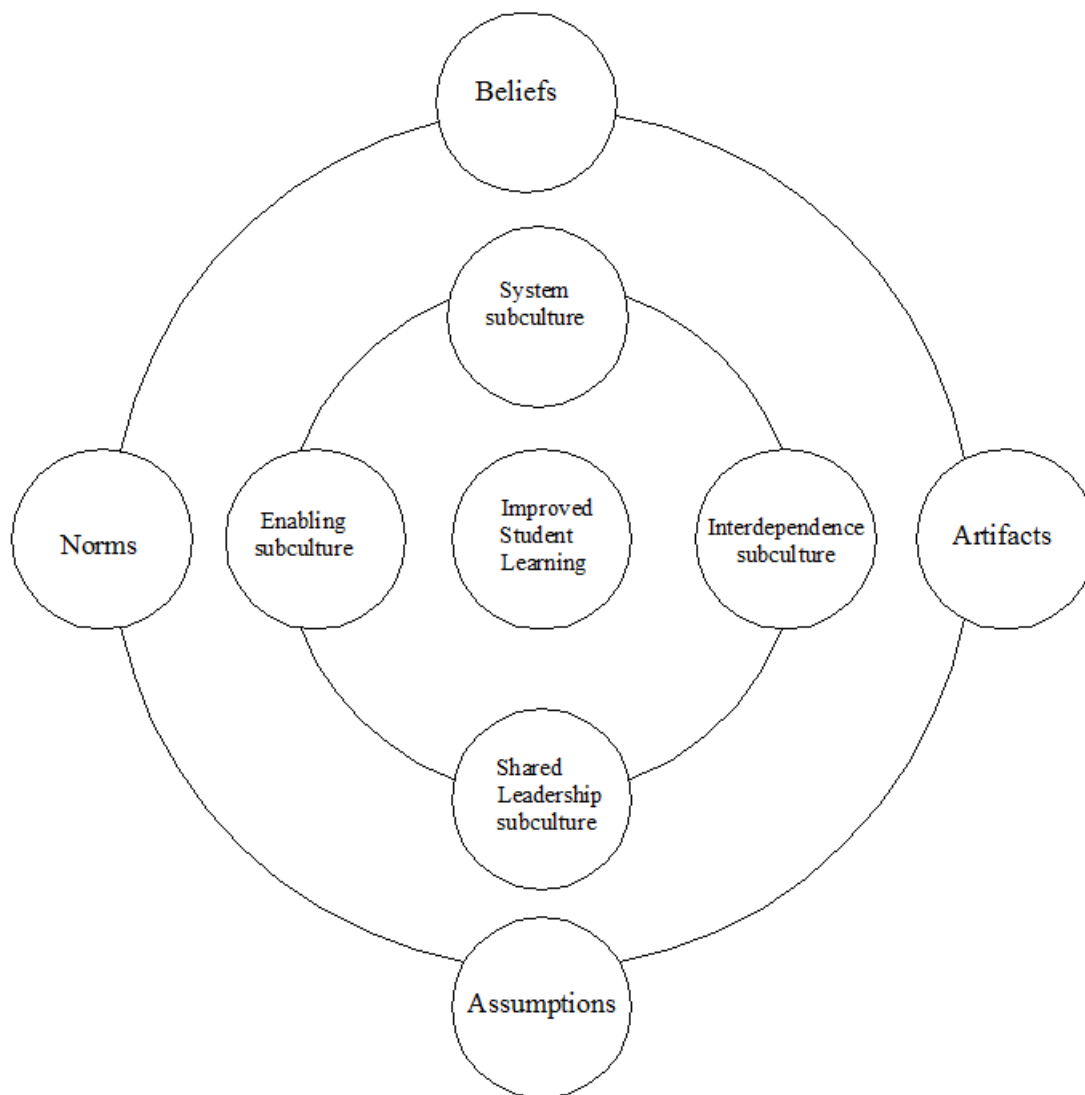
Figure 5.1. Culture in Context: A Reconceptualization

       Professional leadership culture can be articulated around the goal of improving

student learning, as illustrated in Figure 5.1. As the figure illustrates, encircling this

center is a concentric circle containing four subcultures characterizing the professional

leadership culture of the school, namely: the *interdependence subculture*, the *shared*

leadership subculture, the *enabling subculture*, and the *system subculture*. These four

subcultures existed amongst professionals as they focused their collective attention to

improving student learning.

Interdependence subculture involved collaboration amongst the professionals as a means of improving student learning. Shared leadership subculture was seen as being of importance as participants recognized that by communicating and working together, these factors had an impact on student learning. Participants noted that creating an enabling subculture was achieved by building positive leadership relationships through collaboration as a constructive means to having an effect on student learning. The system subculture played a role in shaping the professional leadership culture through the establishment of grade-alike groups, collaborative inquiry team meetings, and providing professional development focused around a goal of improving student learning.

The outer circle represents the broad cultural levels of Schein's framework, namely: artifacts, beliefs and values, assumptions, and norms which provided conditions for the establishment of the school's professional leadership culture.

Discussion

From this study of the professional leadership culture and its relationship to student learning, four subcultures emerged from a collective focus on improving student learning. These four cultures are: a culture of interdependence (collaboration), a culture of shared leadership, an enabling culture (qualities of trust, positive relationships, communication), and a system culture. These four cultures are discussed more fully in the light of related research and scholarly work in the field.

Building the Collaborative Subculture

All the participants commented on the belief in collaboration as a means of building a culture in which they relied on each other, which meant that the school's efforts at improving student learning were expanded rather than duplicated. DuFour and

155

Eaker (1998) endorsed the concept of collaboration on the part of teachers as the single most important factor to ensure student learning in schools. They found that creating teams of teachers is one of the most effective ways to promote collaboration, but they stress that four prerequisites must occur before teams are organized: First, time for collaboration must be entrenched within the school day, week and year. DuFour and Eaker (1998) argued that collaboration by invitation only is ineffective. They further maintained the belief that meaningful opportunities for collaboration must be embedded into the daily life of the school in order for collaborative cultures to take root. Second, the purposes of collaboration must be made clear to all participants. Third, participants must have opportunities for training and support in their efforts to learn about and become effective collaborators. Lastly, educators must acknowledge and accept both their individual and collective responsibilities for working together as professional colleagues.

From my findings I would add a fifth element that educators must be given the freedom and trust to engage in informal activity which can be very fruitful in improving instructional practices. but from my interviews and observations, it seemed that the most informal type of collaboration (e.g. teachers talking at the end of the day) provided the most meaningful benefit to teachers as they reflected on what to plan for the following day.

At ValleyView School there was an expectation of collaboration, however as DuFour and Burnette (2002) noted, collaboration doesn't occur simply by putting together teams of people They found that collaboration requires skill development over time and coaching. It also requires structures that encourage and invite shared work around common goals. This was certainly evident through my observations in

156

ValleyView School where professionals saw formal collaboration as being valuable in identifying students' support needs through establishing grade-alike teams which in turn used the Continuous Improvement Team template provided by the school division to record their notes as evidence of weekly progress towards achieving the school's goals, of which improving student learning is paramount and where system and school level leadership provided the initial vision and underlying structure. Participants commented on the belief that as a group they were always collaborating, and trying to figure out things for the benefit of the students and in pursuit of this endeavor, it trickles down to affecting student learning.

Findings from observations and participant transcripts seemed to indicate that the culture of professional collaboration flourished at ValleyView School. Participants commented on the belief that they viewed collaboration as a means to an end, that in order to generate and enhance the conditions for student learning, one needs the artifacts, beliefs and values and assumptions that come from implementing collaborative practices in the forms of collaborative improvement teams, grade-alike groups and other team endeavors focused on achieving a goal.

Arguments for Shared Leadership in Educational Contexts

Many participants in my study commented on the common belief that they can exert their influence on student learning by modeling working together. Consequently, they commented on the belief that they all took different leadership roles in terms of the work that they do with students. All the participants reflected the belief that everyone needed to have a leadership voice within the school and that stakeholders within education needed to support each other. Supporting this notion, Kaplan and Owings

157

(2013) argued that it is naïve to think that principals can carry the burden of school leadership and school improvement by themselves. They further elaborated that such an approach is unsustainable and does not promote organizational improvement. The first and only standard for judging the success of schools and the education system should be how well every child learns. Their finding in turn is directly related to leadership culture in a school.

Findings from my study at ValleyView seemed to identify that successful communication and shared leadership practices were in themselves a support for further success as these practices deepen and extend knowledge and expertise amongst all professionals.

On the basis of my findings I would fully agree with the findings of Kaplan and Owings (2013) who indicated that strong cultures are characterized by networks in which members routinely connect around shared problems and goals. I found that all of the study participants were clear in their remarks about the importance of sharing leadership and communication as factors that have an impact on student learning. Participants noted that by planning together, they are able to share ideas about what somebody else tried, what worked, what doesn't work, and that you can try different things that will hopefully have a positive impact on improving student learning. This finding is relevant as it points to literature that identified that school leadership is an interdependent phenomenon. O'Neil and Conzemius (2002) found that schools showing continuous improvement in student results were those whose cultures are permeated by four key aspects: a shared focus, reflective practices, collaboration and partnerships and an ever increasing leadership capacity. Focus is achieved when everyone reflects and shares goals, which

are focused on student learning and allow the staff to know what to focus on. Findings from my study would support this notion of culture permeated by four key aspects. Reflective practice was displayed at ValleyView through my observations of the communicative interactions amongst the professionals at staff meetings and continuous improvement team meetings which focused on improving student learning. All the participants were engaged in reviewing student data, having discussions around possible strategies to improve learning of their students and focusing on implementing an individualized plan unique for each teacher. At ValleyView they reflected the belief that shared leadership was based on recognizing that no single individual in government, education administration or teaching possesses all the knowledge, skills or talent to achieve a change.

An Enabling Subculture - Qualities of Trust, Communication, Positive Relationships

All the participants at ValleyView commented on the belief that creating an enabling subculture was achieved by building positive leadership relationships through collaboration as a constructive means to having an effect on student learning. Many participants recognized the fact that by building positive relationships fostered around communication and trust aided in constructing this subculture. Buffum et al., asserted, "This collaborative learning enables team members to develop new skills to better meet the learning needs of their students" (2009, p. 53). Ultimately, Fullan (2005) argued that if true professional collaboration is to take place, we must look at how we can build trusting, respectful relationships amongst all the educational members.

The recognition of positive communication as a means of establishing trust was supported by Kruse et al. (2009) who found that the crucial element needed was trust and engagement from all the partners. Mitchell and Sackney (2011) added that they found students and parents would more readily join others in collaborative practices when they are invited and when a feeling of trust is established. They further argued that without trust, a true community cannot be developed. Seashore Louis et al. (2011) confirmed that the common thread running through the development of any framework focusing on improving school culture is focused on building trust and supporting individuals to preserve what is valuable to them as a collective. Handford (2013) determined that for teachers, having trust in an important factor as they go about thinking about their work and addressing the challenges that they face in improving their practices. Kaplan et al., (2013) concluded that the school culture encourages people to interact in cooperative rather than competitive ways which allows teachers to have greater trust in their leaders and their school.

While accepting the importance of building a collaborative relationship founded in trust and respect was expected based on the literature (Handford, 2013; Kaplan et al., 2013; Kruse et al., 2009; Mitchell et al., 2011; Seashore Louis et al., 2011), it is still significant in that it demonstrates a relationship to improving student learning. Simply put, student learning has a better chance of improving if there are collaborative relationships amongst all the professionals that are based in trust and respect.

Findings from my study would support the conclusions supported throughout the literature as professionals at ValleyView affirmed that they felt trusted, respected, and supported to learn from their mistakes and each other. Professionals at ValleyView

commented on the belief that there was a culture of trust within the entire school as they were given freedom to try new teaching strategies and planning. They noted that this feeling of trust was a major factor in building relationships in the school. Participants reflected the belief that they were encouraged as part of a team in the context of grade-alike meetings, team teaching, and collaborative inquiry team meetings to build relationships and partnerships within the school and the broader community as a means of establishing a trust based culture amongst all professionals.

Shared Leadership/Administrative Leadership: Differential Impacts on Learning

Participants' reflections at ValleyView School indicated a belief in the importance of building positive leadership relationships through collaboration as a constructive means to having an effect on student learning. This finding was not surprising as many researchers have arrived at a similar conclusion. Peterson (1997) claimed that the quest for school improvement has the best chance of success when those individuals involved in the process work collaboratively to identify and solve problems. Barth (2006) believed the premise that it was the relationships among the educators in a school that define and shape a school's culture. He asserted; "The nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else" (p. 9). In their report on the world's best school system, Barber and Mourshed (2007) emphasized the importance of building a relationship-based shared leadership as they found that no single school system had been turned around without a sustained, committed, and talented leadership. Kaplan and Owings (2013) noted that school cultures may be weak or strong. They added that a complex network in which members routinely connect around shared goals is one quality

161

that defines a strong culture of interconnectedness. Kruse and Seashore Louis (2009) affirmed, "Rather than working in isolation, people work together, which means that the school's efforts are expanded rather than duplicated" (p. 171). This partnership requires communication, cooperation, consultation and collaboration among administrators, teachers, students and parents. We are all striving to create better schools where every student succeeds (Buffum, Mattos & Weber, 2009; Fullan, 2005; Kruse et al., 2009; Kaplan & Owings, 2013).

Participants at ValleyView noted that there is a sense of partnership as most decisions are usually up for discussion with input from the various school level committees and individual teachers. These collective actions in ValleyView School seemed to reflect a demonstrated belief in developing a leadership capacity which grew through sharing, as this act created the environment for leadership, one where individuals focused on student learning, reflected on student assessments, and learned as a collaborative team.

Research by Robinson and Timperley (2007) arrived at the assertion that teachers have the greatest influence on student learning. Consequently, all the participants recognized this fact and discussed the importance of establishing these collaborative relationships. One possible explanation could be that participants recognize the strength in working with other and tapping into that collective expertise. Another explanation could be that participants react on a more personal level to their peers and the informal mentoring found within these relationships. Fairman et al., (2012) summarized that the work of teacher leaders results in teacher learning as well as improved student learning.

This finding was also reflected in research by a variety of researchers that identified that the influence of school leadership on student learning is indirect (Hattie, 2009; Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood, Patten & Jantzi, 2010; Leithwood & Sun, 2012). These studies suggested that principals do not directly influence learning. This would in turn suggests that the professional leadership culture plays a larger part as it relates to student learning

Fairman and Mackenzie (2012) reported that administrators certainly have an important role to play in supporting and encouraging change in school culture. The implication of this finding is important in that formal administrative leadership has an indirect influence on student learning. Guskey and Sparks (2002) found that administrators typically do not directly influence student learning. Instead, their knowledge and practices indirectly influence students through the development of school policies within a school plan focused on establishing elements of the school's community and culture. Teachers at ValleyView reported that administrative leadership had an indirect impact on student learning and that this support came in the form of giving approval, providing funding assistance in order to obtain instructional materials, trusting their decisions, and encouraging them to become better educators.

The finding of this study that formal leadership had a role mainly in supporting and improving teaching, and the 'conditions' for student learning. Participants were unanimous on this point, providing further support for the findings of other research.

The Role of the System Subculture

At ValleyView, this study revealed that the system did play a role in shaping the professional leadership culture. This finding was also reflected within the literature that

notes that schools are organizations are no different from any other in regard to the formation of their school culture. School leaders from every level can create, and are a key, to shaping school culture (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Engels, Hotton, Devos, Bouckenooghe & Aelterman, 2008; Dufour & Burnette, 2002; DuFour, 2004 Firestone & Seashore Louis, 1999; Fullan, 2001; Kaplan & Owens, 2013; Kruse & Seashore Louis, 2009; MacNeil et al., 2009; Peterson & Deal, 1998; Samuels, 2010; Seashore Louis et al., 2011; Tubbs et al., 2008; White et al., 2003).This finding was evident in ValleyView as the system played a role through the establishment of grade-alike groups, collaborative inquiry team meetings, and providing professional development focused around a goal of improving student learning.

Following its study of the effectiveness of school districts in the United States in improving instruction and achievement in their schools, the Learning First Alliance (2003) found that the districts that had experienced most success in these areas had the following common characteristics: they implemented a framework to support instructional improvement; they used research-based principles to guide professional development; they had established significant connections between system vision and school strategies to improve instruction; they created working networks of instructional leaders to provide support to teachers; and they modelled research-based professional development. These systems broadened their leadership to extend beyond traditional roles utilize the resources of other actors including teachers, teacher leaders and vice-principals, in effect, shepherding system-wide change in which principals and teacher-leaders were central actors.

There was substantial evidence emerging from my study that the system had established, and sustained, a vision and presence directed at continuous improvement of instruction and student learning. Their motto *we inspire learning* and was further elaborated in their Leadership for Learning model discussed previously. This model had at its center the focus of improving students' learning and achievement through sharing leadership, setting priorities, leading and engaging in learning stimulated inquiry, and ensuring expected practice participation in curriculum, instruction, and assessment amongst all professionals. This belief was further characterized through weekly staff meetings, collaborative improvement team meetings, grade-alike meetings and other team meetings which had as a goal to establish a reflective focus around data and working collaboratively on improving student learning.

Implications

The implications of the study's themes and conclusions for theory, practice, policy, and research are presented in this section.

Implications for Theory

Though it is somewhat limited in its relevance across organizational contexts, my study has implications for theory in the several questions it raises about the impacts of formal and informal leadership, the varying relevance of Schein's culture model across organizational types, the phenomenon of context, and the identification and role of subcultures within the broader organizational culture. For example, my research prompts some reflection on implications for theory building around the nature and role of context in organizational culture: the internal and external contexts, system context, the administrative context the community context, the teacher, student, administrative and

165

support contexts, the change context, the societal context etc. and how these interact with each other and with the school and system culture.

This study also raises questions in my mind about the nature and roles of the subcultures: how they are related to the broader culture; how they might extend the theory of culture. I was interested during my study in the phenomenon of how organizations that are geographically distributed (like the system in my study) maintain their influence and management, and sustain a workable balance between their focus on system vision and control, and the obligation of individual schools to address the idiosyncratic needs of their own communities and student populations.

Implications for Policy

The consideration for policy is to note structures that promote collaboration amongst professionals be that in the form of grade-alike groupings, continuous improvement teams, and subject committees, depending of course upon the nature of the professional and institutional context. In the context of this study, system policies could be developed and or refined to enhance the lives of professionals in regard to relevant and sufficient professional development. This would include time for school and system-wide intervisitation, once the exclusive privilege of those in formal leadership positions. Other possibilities for policy emerging from my findings include formalizing opportunities for teacher leadership and engaging in mentorship of neophyte professionals through such mechanisms as team teaching.

Implications for Practice

In attempting to build the best schools, an orientation founded in the belief of continuous improvement is likely to be a fundamental feature of the culture. The

challenge in regard to practice is to strike the right balance. As noted previously, schools are filled with practices and policies that exist simply because that is the way they have always done it. These remnants of culture need to be examined and people need to understand what has occurred and why it has occurred if any changes in practice are to take place. The implication for practice as a leader is in building a bridge between where the school is and where it might go. While obviously, the most obvious focus for leadership is to adopt a vision, other foci should include the development, support, and empowering of others. Towards those goals, I offer five direct implications for practice: finding ways in which teachers can most effectively work together to maximize student learning, establish professional development processes and priorities, develop approaches to supervising the work of school professionals, encourage mentorship practices which maximizes opportunities for teachers to see teaching by others in the school and system, and by learning from the role enactment by those who are working at intensifying leadership by talking to them, understanding where resources lie prior to needing them and establishing trust and support through directed effort.

Enhancing a school's culture is a challenging task. Mark recognized that an increased attention to what matters is important because teachers within the school all take different leadership roles in terms of the work that they do inside and outside of their classroom. It needs to be recognized that teachers are leaders within the school and not just in their classroom. Accepting shared leadership as having a significant impact on student learning as was evident from the participants' voices and this needs to stay in forefront of any practice centered around improving student learning.

167

The above discussion has considerable significance for the processes and content underlying teacher education programs. Consideration of issues relating to leadership and professional culture would serve programs of teacher training very well with a view to ensuring new teachers entering the profession have the knowledge, appreciations, and skills of professional collaboration and leadership.

Implications for Research and Further Study

This study employed a case study methodology, which worked wothin the case study framework by employing qualitative research methods and qualitative data analysis methods to tell its story and put forth its themes and conclusions. Quantitative or mixed approaches might be employed in a number of creative ways to measure both the improvement in students' learning as well as assessing the opinions of teachers, administrators, parents, and students around the concept of culture as it pertains to improving student learning.

There is an urgent need for more case studies that would enable a meta-analysis of research on this theme of professional leadership culture and student learning. Additional research from the perspectives of teacher leaders engaged in building a school culture may help articulate new directions in the area of school culture and student learning.

From a broader school community perspective, studies of the community and parent culture of schools, employing a similar methodology, would provide valuable insights into the voices of parents, students and school professionals concerning the connection of the voices of these key actors on their connection to student learning.

Furthermore, a replication of this study in a secondary school context (grades nine to twelve) may reveal some additional insights concerning student learning at a

secondary level. This insight may in part arise due to the age of the students, the curriculum level that the teachers use to guide their instruction, and the overall environment of the school.

Concluding Statement

In a study conducted by Louis and Wahlstrom (2011), the authors noted that the common thread running through the development of any framework or plan focusing on improving school culture and student learning is focused on four key areas: by supporting individuals and groups to identify and preserve what is valuable to them: by guiding the school to chip away at cultural features that inhibit change: by helping members to understand the forces and conditions that will shape their future, and by consistently checking to make sure that the aspirations for change are understood and that they result in observable new behaviours.

Ultimately, culture affects everything that goes on in a school (Hattie, 2009; Peterson & Deal, 1998; Seashore Louis et al., 2011). This point resonated in the data within my qualitative study which became particulaly valuable in the voices of the professionals giving life to my research. My conversations combined with my extended observations in this school allowed me to be close to the actual professional work-lives of the professionals and to uncover connections regarding their perceptions concerning the nature of professional leadership culture and its perceived relationship to student learning. In the process I learned a great deal about the intracies of professional leadership culture and the impacts of subcultures and contexts.

In retrospect, this study I found the study of culture significant in my professional life in the context as an educator, as an administror at a formal level, as a researcher in regard to the context of research and as a professional and how one works with others.

Finally, this research journey has profound impacts on me as a researcher, teaching professional, and professional leader. I perceive qualitative research with new appreciations for the great potential of qualitative research when approached as a reciprocal interpretive relationship between researcher and other participants. In the process, I have learned a great deal about the intracies of professional leadership culture within schools, and how it can impact subcultures, contexts, and the lives of those involved. I view all teachers as professional leaders. As a professional leader, I have come to appreciate even more the great benefits to student learning that can be gained when those in formal school leadership positions extend the leadership conversation to encompass the full professional cohort.

REFERENCES

Ajaheb-Jahangeer, S., & Jahangeer, A. C. (2004). School culture in a private secondary institution in Mauritius. *International Education Journal, 5*(2), 247-254.

Argyris, C., & Schon, D. A. (1978). *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Argyris, D. C., & Schon, D. A. (1996). *Organizational learning II: Theory, method and practice*. New York, NY: Addison-Wesley.

Barber, M., & Mourshed, M. (2009). Shaping the future: How good educational systems come out on top. Retrieved from http://www.mckinseyonsociety.com/downloads/reports/Education/Worlds_School_Systems_Final.pdf

Barnett, K., & McCormick, J. (2004). Leadership and individual principal-shared relationships in schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 40*(3), 406-434.

Barth, R. S. (2006). Improving relationships within the schoolhouse. *Educational Leadership, 63*(6), 8-13.

Berger, A. (1995). *Cultural criticism a primer of key concepts*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Blase, J., & Blase, J. (2004). The dark side of school leadership: Implications for administrator preparation. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 3*(4), 245-273.

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2003). *Reframing organizations artistry, choice and leadership* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2008). *Reframing organizations artistry, choice, and leadership* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

171

Brady, P. (2005). Inclusionary and exclusionary secondary schools: The effect of school culture on student outcomes. *Interchange: A Quarterly Review of Education, 36*(3), 295-311.

Buffum, A., Mattos, M., & Weber, C. (2009). *Pyramid response to intervention*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Burrell, G., & Morgan, G. (1985). *Sociological paradigms and organizational analysis*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Bush, T. (1995). *Theories of educational management*. London: Paul Chapman.

Chamberlain, S. (2005). Recognizing and responding to cultural differences in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 40*(4), 195-211.

Clayton, J. K., & Johnson, B. (2011). If it ain't broke, don't fix it: A new principal is in town. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership, 14*(4), 22-30.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge Falmer.

Cook, L., & Friend, M. (1991). Principles for the practice of collaboration in schools, *Preventing School Failure, 35*(4), 6-9.

Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. L. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Coyle, L. M., & Witcher, A. E. (1992). Transforming the idea into action: Policies and practices to enhance school effectiveness. *Urban Education, 26*(4), 390-400.

Cozza, B. (2010). Transforming teaching into a collaborative culture: An attempt to

    create a professional development school-university partnership. *The Educational*

    Forum, 74(3), 227-241.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five*

    approaches (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Danielson, C. (2007). *Enhancing Professional Practice. A Framework for Teaching* (2nd

    ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Deal, T., & Peterson, K. (1994). *The leadership paradox: Balancing logic and artistry in*

    schools. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Deal, T., & Peterson, K. (1998). How leaders influence the culture of schools. *Realizing*

    A Positive School Climate, 56(1), 28-30.

Deal, T., & Peterson, K. (2009). *Shaping school culture pitfalls, paradoxes & promises*.

    San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Demers, C. (2007). *Organizational change theories: A synthesis*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage

    Publications.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2003). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative*

    materials (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials.

    In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative*

    research (2nd ed., pp. 1-47). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Doyle, L. (2004). Leadership for community building. Changing how we think and act.

    The Clearing House, 77(5), 196-198.

Drago-Severson, E. (2007). Helping teachers learn: Principals as professional

    development leaders. *Teachers College Record, 109*(1), 70-125.

Drago-Severson, E. & Pinto, K. (2006). School leadership for reducing teacher isolation:

    Drawing from the well of human resources. *The International Journal of Leadership*

    in Education, 9(2), 129-155.

Driscoll, M. P. (2005). *Psychology of learning for instruction* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA:

    Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

DuFour, R. (2004). Culture shift doesn't happen overnight-or even without conflict.

    Journal of School Development, 25(4), 63-64.

DuFour, R. (2004b). What is a professional learning community? *Educational*

    Leadership, 61(8), 6-12.

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & Many, T. (2006). *Learning by doing. A handbook*

    for professional learning communities at work. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best*

    practices for enhancing student achievement. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

DuFour, R., & Fullan, M. (2013). *Cultures built to last {systemic PLCs at work}.*

    Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

DuFour, R., & Marzano, M. (2011). *Leaders of learning. How district, school, and*

    classroom leaders improve student achievement. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

DuFour, R., & Burnette, B. (2002). Pull out negativity by its roots. *Journal of Staff*

    Development, 23(3), 27-30.

DuFour, R., & Mattos, M. (2013). How do principals really improve schools?

    Educational Leadership, 70(7), 34-40.

Dupper, D. R., & Meyer-Adams, N. (2002). Low-level violence: A neglected aspect of school culture. *Urban Education, 37*(3), 350-364.

Engels, N., Hotton, G., Devos, G., Bouckenooghe, D., & Aelterman, A. (2008). Principals in schools with positive school culture. *Educational Studies, 34*(3), 159-274. doi:10.1080/03055690701811263

Fairman, J., & Mackenzie, S. (2012). Spheres of teacher leadership action for learning. *Professional Development in Education, 38*(2), 229-246. doi:10.1080/19415257.2012.657865

Finnan, C., Schnepel, K. C., & Anderson, L. W. (2003). Powerful learning environments: The critical link between school and classroom cultures. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 8*(4), 391-418.

Fiolm C. M., & Lyles, M. A. (1985). Organizational learning. *The Academy of Management Review, 10*(4), 803-813.

Firestone, W., & Seashore Louis K. (1999). Schools as cultures. In J. Murphy & K. Seashore Louis (Ed.), *Handbook of research on educational administration* (2nd ed., pp. 297-322). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Flyberg, B. (2011). Case study. What is a case study? In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed., pp. 301-316). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Foster, W. (1989). Towards a critical practice of leadership. In J. Smyth (Ed.), *Critical perspectives on educational leadership* (pp. 39-62). London, ENG: The Falmer Press.

Friesen, D. (1984). Jobs and money--the high school culture. *Canadian Administrator, 23*(4), 1-5.

Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depth of educational reform*. London; New York: Falmer Press.

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Fullan, M. (2005). *Leadership & sustainability: System thinkers in action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Fullan, M., & Ballew, A. C. (2004). *Leading in a culture of change: Personal action guide and workbook* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Glatter, R. (2009). Wisdom and bus schedules: Developing school leadership. *School Leadership & Management,* (3), 225-237. doi:10.1080/13632430902793767

Glickman, C., Gordon, S., & Ross-Gordon, J. (2014). *Supervision and instructional leadership. A developmental approach* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Gomez, M. O., Marcoulides, G. A., & Heck, R. H. (2012). Examining culture and performance at different middle school level structures. *International Journal of Educational Management, 26*(2), 205-222.

Gonzalez, M., Glasman, N., & Glasman, L. D. (2002). Daring to link principal preparation programs to student achievement in schools. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 1*(3), 265-283.

The Saskatchewan Education Act, (1995). S.S., 231 c.E-02

Gruenert, S., & Whitaker, T. (2015). *School culture rewired how to define, assess, and transform it*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Gruenert, S. (2005). Correlations of collaborative school cultures with student

    achievement. *NASSP Bulletin, 89*(645), 43-55.

Guskey, T., & Sparks, D. (2002). *Linking professional development to improvements in*

    student learning. Paper presented at the annual meeting of American Education

    Research Association, New Orleans, LA. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED464

    112)

Hallinger, P. (2011). Leadership for learning: Lessons from 40 years of empirical

    research. *Journal of Educational Administration, 49*(2), 125-142.

    doi:10.1108/09578231111116699

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (1996). Reassessing the principal's role in school

    effectiveness: A review of empirical research, 1980-1995. *Educational*

    Administration Quarterly, 32(1), 5-44.

Handford, V., & Leithwood, K. (2013). Why teachers trust school leaders. *Journal of*

    Educational Administration, 51(2), 194-212. doi:10.1108/09578231311304706

Handy, C. (1986). *Understanding organizations* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Facts On File.

Harris, A., & Chapman, C. (2002). Democratic leadership for school improvement in

    challenging contexts. *International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning,*

    6(9), 1-10.

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning a synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to*

    achievement. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hofstede, G., & Hofstede, J. (2005). *Cultures and organizations: Software for the mind.*

    intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival (2nd ed.). New York, NY:

    McGraw-Hill.

Hofstede, G., Hofstede, J., & Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and organizations: Software for the mind.* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Iannaccone, L., & Jamgochian, R. (1985). High performing curriculum and instructional leadership in the climate of excellence. *NASSP Bulletin, 69*(481), 28-35.

Jerald, C. D. (2006). *School culture: "the hidden curriculum." issue brief.* Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement. Washington. Retrieved from http://www.centerforcsri.org.

Kaplan, L. & Owings, W. (2013). *Culture re-boot. Reinvigorating school culture to improve student outcomes*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Kruse, S. & Seashore Louis, K. (2009). *Building strong school cultures*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Lam, S., Yim, P., & Lam, W. (2002). Transforming school culture: Can true collaboration be initiated? *Educational Research, 44*(2), 181-195.

Lancy, D. F. (1993). *Qualitative research in education: An introduction to the major traditions.* New York: Longman

Ledoux, M. (2005). School culture in action. *Journal of Education, 31*(3), 237-239.

Leithwood, K. (2011). Leadership and student learning: What works and how. In J. Robertson & H. Timperley (Eds.), *Leadership and learning* (pp. 41-70). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Leithwood, K., Aitken, R., & Jantzi, D. (2006). *Making schools smarter* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (1999). The relative effects of principal and teacher sources of leadership on student engagement with school. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 35*(5), 679-706.

Leithwood, K., Patten, S., & Jantzi, D. (2010). Testing a conception of how school leadership influences student learning. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 46*(5), 671-706. doi:10.1177/0013161X10377347

Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, L., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *Executive summary: How leadership influences student learning.* (Executive Summary). New York: The Wallace Foundation.

Leithwood, K. & Sun, J. (2012). Transformational school leadership effects on student achievement. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 11*(4), 418-451. doi:10.1080/15700763.2012.681001

Levin, B. (2001). *Reforming education: From orgins to outcomes*. London, ENG: Routledge Farmer.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA.: Sage Publications.

MacNeil, A. J., Prater, D. L., & Busch, S. (2009). The effects of school culture and climate on student achievement. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 12*(1), 73-84. doi:10.1080/13603120701576241

Marcoulides, G. A., Heck, R. H., & Papanastasiou, C. (2005). Student perceptions of school culture and achievement: Testing the invariance of a model. *International Journal of Educational Management, 19*(2), 140-152.

Marshall, C., Pritchard, R., & Gunderson, B. (2004). Cultural norming in schools in "healthy" and "unhealthy" districts. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 3*(2), 85-109.

Marzano, R. (2003). *What works in schools. Translating research into action.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Matthews, D., & Menna, R. (2004). Solving problems together: Parent/school/community collaboration at a time of educational and social change. *Education Canada, 43*(1), 20-23.

McCollum, E. C., & Yoder, N. P. (2011). School culture, teacher regard, and academic aspirations among middle school students. *Middle Grades Research Journal, 6*(2), 65-74.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M., & Huberman, M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Beverley Hills, CA: Sage.

Mitchell, C. & Sackney, L. (2011). *Profound improvement building learning-community capacity on living-system principles* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Mitchell, J. T., & Willower, D. J. (1992). Organizational culture in a good high school. *Journal of Educational Administration, 30*(1), 6-16.

Morrow, S. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(2), 250-260. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.250

Muhammad, A. (2009). *Transforming school culture. How to overcome staff division*. Bloomington: IN: Solution Tree Press.

O'Neill, J., & Conzemius, A. (2002). Four keys to a smooth flight. *Journal of Staff Development, 23*(2), 14-18.

Parish, R., & Krueger, J. (1987). The face of change. *Planning and Changing, 18*(2), 98-105.

Peterson, K., & Deal, T. (1998). How leaders influence the culture of schools. *Educational Leadership, 56*(1), 28-30.

Peterson, A. M. (1997). Aspects of school climate: A review of the literature. *ERS Spectrum, 15*(1), 36-42.

Pritchard, R. J., Morrow, D., & Marshall, J. C. (2005). School and district culture as reflected in student voices and student achievement. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 16*(2), 153-177.

Purkey, S. C., & Smith, M. S. (1983). Effective schools: A review. *Elementary School Journal, 83*(4), 427-452.

Reeves, D. (2006). *The learning leader: how to focus school improvement for better results*. Alexandria,VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Robinson, V. & Timperley, H. (2007). The leadership of the improvement of teaching and learning: Lessons from initiatives with positive outcomes for students. *Australasian Journal of Education, 51*(3), 246-262.

Rosenholtz, S. J. (1989). *Teachers' workplace: The social organization of schools*. New York, NY: Longman.

Saldana, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sample, S. B. (2010). The pursuit of wisdom: A modest, but essential prescription for the future. *Innovative High Education, 35*, 79-89.

Samuels, C. (2010). Study: Effective principals embrace collective leadership. *Education Week, 29*(37), 1-4.

Saphier, J., King, M., & D'Auria, J. (2006). Three strands form strong school leadership. *Journal of Staff Development, 27*(2), 51-57.

Saskatoon Public Schools (n.d.) Leadership for Learning. Retrieved from
http://www.spsd.sk.ca/division/leadershipforlearning/Pages/default.aspx

Sawyer, R. (2001). Teachers who grow as collaborative leaders: The rocky road of support. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 9*(38), 1-20.

Schein, E. (1997). *Organizational culture and leadership.* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership.* (4th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Schwan, C., & Spady, W. (1998). Why change doesn't happen and how to make sure it does. *Educational Leadership, 55*(7), 45-47.

Seashore Louis, K., & Wahlstrom, K. (2011). Principals as cultural leaders. *Phi Delta Kappa, 92*(5), 52-56. Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Shields, C. (2004). Dialogical leadership for social justice: Overcoming pathologies for silence. *Education Administration Quarterly, 40*(1), 109-132.

Southworth, G. (2011). Connecting leadership and learning. In J. Robertson & H.

    Timperley (Eds.), *Leadership and learning* (pp. 71-99). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

    Publications.

Stake, R. E. (2005). Qualititative case studies. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.),

    Sage handbook of qualitative research (3rd ed., pp. 443-446). Thousand Oaks: CA:

    Sage.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory*

    procedures and techniques. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Strauss, A. L., & Corbin, J. M. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and*

    procedures for developing grounded theory (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

    Publications.

Stoll, L. (2011). Leading professional learning communities. In J. Robertson & H.

    Timperley (Eds.), *Leadership and learning* (pp. 103-117). Los Angeles; CA: SAGE.

Strom, M. (2014). *Lead with wisdom*. Milton, Australia: John Wiley & Sons.

Supovitz, J. A. (2002). Developing communities of instructional practice. *Teachers*

    College Record, 104(8), 1591-1626.

Talbert, J. (2009). Professional learning communities at the crossroads: How systems

    hinder or engender change. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan, D. Hopkins

    & SpringerLink (Online service) (Eds.), *Second international handbook of*

    educational change (pp. 555-570). Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media

    B.V. doi:10.10007/978-90-481-2660-6_32

Taylor, R. T. (2010). Leadership to improve student achievement: Focus the culture on learning. *AASA Journal of Scholarship and Practice, 7*(1), 10-23.

Terosky, A. (2014). From a managerial imperative to a learning imperative: Experiences of urban, public school principals. *Education Administration Quarterly, 50*(1), 3-33. doi:10.1177/0013161X3488597

Thacker, J. L., & McInerney, W. D. (1992). Changing academic culture to improve student achievement in the elementary schools. *ERS Spectrum, 10*(4), 18-23.

Timperley, H., & Robertson, J. (2011). Establishing platforms for leadership and learning. In J. Robertson, & H. Timperley (Eds.), *Leadership and learning* (pp. 3-12). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.

Togneri, W. (2003). Beyond Islands of Excellence: What Districts Can Do to Improve Instruction and Achievement in All Schools – A Leadership Brief. *State Education Standard, 4*(2), 1-16.

Tracy, S. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight "big tent" criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 16*(10), 837-851. doi:10.1177/1077800410383121

Trubowitz, S. (2005). Creating a culture for learning on balance. *Educational Horizons, 83*(3), 19-34.

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Tschannen-Moran, B. (2011). Taking a strengths-based focus improves school climate. *Journal of School Leadership, 21*(3), 422-448.

Tubbs, J., & Garner, K. (2008). The impact of school climate on school outcomes. *Journal of College Teaching and Learning, 5*(9), 17-26.

Venables, D. R. (2011). *The practice of authentic PLCs: A guide to effective teacher teams*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Vescio, V., Ross, D., & Adams, A. (2008). A review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teacher practice and student learning. *Teacher and Teacher Education, 24*, 80-91.

Villani, C. J. (1999). Community culture and school climate. *School Community Journal, 9*(1), 103-105.

Wagner, C. (2006). The school leader's tool for assessing and improving school culture. *Principal Leadership Middle School Edition, 7*(4), 41-44.

Walker, K. (2011). Leadership for sustainable development in commonwealth Africa. *8th Forum of Commonwealth Heads of African Public Service,* 1-103.

Webb, T., Neumann, M., & Jones, L. (2004). Politics, school improvement, and social justice: A triadic of teacher leadership. *The Education Forum, 68*, 254-262.

West, M., Ainscow, M., & Stanford, J. (2005). Sustaining improvement in schools in challenging circumstances: A study of successful practice. *School Leadership and Management, 25*(1), 77-93.

White, T., Martin, B., & Johnson, J. (2003). Gender, professional orientation, and student achievement: Elements of school culture. *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership, 1*(4), 351-365.

Williams, R. (1976). *Keywords A vocabulary of culture and society*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, E. K. (1971). *Sociology: Rules, roles, and relationships* (Rev ed.). Homewood, Ill., Dorsey Press.

Yin, R. (2003). *Case study research design and methods.* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Zigarelli, M. A. (1996). An empirical test of conclusions from effective schools research. *Journal of Educational Research, 90*(2), 103-110.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TEACHER INTERVIEW

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

TEACHER INTERVIEW

Semi Structured Interview Questions

Principal Investigator: Robert Liggett, Ph.D. candidate, Department of Educational Administration
Supervisor: Dr. Patrick Renihan, Department of Educational Administration

Participant:

Department/Unit:

Interview Protocol

Phase I Interviews are anticipated to take approximately 1 hour. Interviews will be recorded in digital file format with the permission and knowledge of the participants. The interview format will be fully described to participants and they will have a chance to ask questions about the interview, the research process or any other aspect of the study. Per university ethics requirements, participants may withdraw from the interview or the research project at any time for any reason simply by requesting so verbally or in writing. Participants will be informed of their rights both in written and spoken format before interviews.

In this semi-structured interview, the interviewer will ask follow up questions relating to participant responses. Follow up questions are intended to seek more information about the themes present in participant's responses.

Time of Interview: _____ Approximate length of interview _____
(1 hour) Second follow up interview _____ (1/2 hour).

Concepts directing this interview are attempting to discover the professional leadership culture of the school based on responses from each individual teachers/administrators.

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewee: _____(Anonymity – fictional name will be substituted)

Position of Interviewee: _____

1. What is your general teaching assignment?

2. How long have you been teaching in this school?

3. How many years of teaching experience have you had?

4. Describe the school contexts (i.e. elementary, middle, high, community, rural, urban) where you have taught.

5. What formal leadership positions (i.e. principal, vice-principal, consultant, etc.) have you held?

Research Question One: What patterns relating to professional leadership culture are perceived to exist within the school?

Culture is based on shared learning. It is a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, needs to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to problems. I am interested particularly in the leadership culture as experienced by professionals in this school.

1. What is it like to be a teacher in this school?

2. How would you describe the professional leadership culture generally in this school? (Professional leadership culture is defined as the shared assumptions, practices, beliefs, and values concerning leadership among professionals that hold an organization together.)

(a) *Is it important to teachers in this school that they be involved in leadership activities?*

3. Give me some specific examples of areas where teachers show leadership involving the professional team (teachers and administrators).

Can teachers initiate ideas relating to the improvement of teaching practices?

Can teachers initiate ideas relating to the operational of the school as a whole?

E.g. school trips, events, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, etc.

(a) Give me some specific examples of areas where administrators show leadership.

Re: teaching practice, operation of the school, etc.

4. Is collaboration a shared value among professionals in this school?

How is this evident?

(Examples of teacher working together on school matters.

Examples of teachers working together on improving learning and teaching.

Other examples.)

(b) In what ways do teachers collaborate (work together) with administrators on improving teaching and learning?

5. Do you have opportunities for developing your expertise in working with other professionals? Learning from each other? (Shared leadership)

(a) Can you provide examples of shared leadership in which teachers are involved?

(b) Can you provide examples of shared leadership in which administrators are involved?

6. What leadership practices do you believe build capacity and commitment among professionals in this school?

E.g. mentorship, professional development opportunities

(a) How do you know that these leadership practices build capacity and commitment among professionals in this school?

7. When you were new to this school staff, how you were introduced into the professional leadership culture of the school?

E.g. Support/mentorship from admin and other teachers

Recognition as a member

Leadership of other members

8. What do you believe to be the major factors influencing the professional leadership culture of this school for the better?

Research Question Two: What is the perceived relationship between this culture and student learning according to these professionals?

1. Describe how specific aspects of your school's professional leadership culture support or influence student learning?

2. How does shared leadership influence student learning in this school?
   (Give me some examples).

 (a) How does administrator leadership influence student learning in this school?
   (Give me some examples).

3. When teachers collaborate in this school, how do you believe that it influences student learning?
   (Give me some examples).

 (a) When administrators collaborate in this school, how do you believe that it influences student learning?
   (Give me some examples).

4. In what ways does the manner in which decisions are made in this school influence student learning?
   (Give me some examples).

5. How does teacher/admin teamwork assist student-learning opportunities?
   (Give me some examples).

6. In order to improve learning within this school, what do you believe the ideal leadership activities/provisions would look like among professionals in this school?
   (Feel free to be creative in your response).

APPENDIX B

ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

APPENDIX B

ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW

Semi Structured Interview Questions

Principal Investigator: Robert Liggett, Ph.D. candidate, Department of Educational Administration
Supervisor: Dr. Patrick Renihan, Department of Educational Administration

Participant:

Department/Unit:

Interview Protocol

Phase I Interviews are anticipated to take approximately 1 hour. Interviews will be recorded in digital file format with the permission and knowledge of the participants. The interview format will be fully described to participants and they will have a chance to ask questions about the interview, the research process or any other aspect of the study. Per university ethics requirements, participants may withdraw from the interview or the research project at any time for any reason simply by requesting so verbally or in writing. Participants will be informed of their rights both in written and spoken format before interviews.

In this semi-structured interview, the interviewer will ask follow up questions relating to participant responses. Follow up questions are intended to seek more information about the themes present in participant's responses.

Time of Interview: _____ Approximate length of interview _____ (1 hour).
Second follow up interview _____ (1/2 hour).

Concepts directing this interview are attempting to discover the professional leadership culture of the school based on responses from each individual administrator.

Date: _____

Place: _____

Interviewee: _____ (Anonymity – fictional name will be substituted)

Position of Interviewee: _____

1. What is your general administrative assignment? (What are you responsible for?)

2. How long have you been an administrator in this school?

3. How many years of administrative leadership have you had?

4. Describe the school contexts (i.e. elementary, middle, high, community, rural, urban) where you have been an administrator?

5. How do you perceive/describe your leadership position (challenging, time-consuming, etc.?)

Research Question One: What patterns relating to professional leadership culture are perceived to exist within the school?

Culture is based on shared learning. It is a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, needs to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to problems. I am interested particularly in the leadership culture as experienced by professionals in this school.

1. What is like to be an administrator in this school?

2. How would you describe the professional leadership culture generally in this school? (Professional leadership culture is defined as the shared assumptions, practices, beliefs, and values concerning leadership among professionals that hold an organization together).

(a) Is it important to teachers in this school that they be involved in leadership activities?

3. Give me some specific examples of areas where teachers show leadership involving the professional team (teachers and administrators).

Can teachers initiate ideas relating to the improvement of teaching practices?

Can teachers initiate ideas relating to the operational of the school as a whole?

E.g. school trips, events, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, etc.

(a) Give me some specific examples of areas where administrators show leadership.

Re: teaching practice, operation of the school, etc.

4. Is collaboration a shared value among professionals in this school?

How is this evident?

(Examples of teacher working together on school matters.

Examples of teachers working together on improving learning and teaching.

Other examples.)

(b) In what ways do teachers collaborate (work together) with administrators on improving teaching and learning?

5. Do you have opportunities for developing your expertise in working with other professionals? Learning from each other? (Shared leadership)

(a) Can you provide examples of shared leadership in which teachers are involved?

(b) Can you provide examples of shared leadership in which administrators are involved?

6. What leadership practices do you believe build capacity and commitment among professionals in this school?

E.g. mentorship, professional development opportunities

(a) How do you know that these leadership practices build capacity and commitment among professionals in this school?

7. When you were new to this school staff, how you were introduced into the professional leadership culture of the school?

E.g. Support/mentorship from admin and other teachers

Recognition as a member

Leadership of other members

8. What do you believe to be the major factors influencing the professional leadership culture of this school for the better?

Research Question Two: What is the perceived relationship between this culture and student learning according to these professionals?

1. What specific aspects of your school's professional leadership culture support or influence student learning?

2. How does shared leadership influence student learning in this school?
   (Give me some examples).

(a) How does administrator leadership influence student learning in this school?
   (Give me some examples).

3. When teachers collaborate in this school, how do you believe it influences student learning?
   (Give me some examples).

(a) When administrators collaborate in this school, how do you believe that it influences student learning?
   (Give me some examples).

4. In what ways does the manner in which decisions are made in this school
   influence student learning?
   (Give me some examples).

5. How does teacher/admin teamwork assist student-learning opportunities?
   (Give me some examples).

6. In order to improve learning within this school, what do you believe the ideal
   leadership activities/provisions would look like among professionals in this
   school?
   (Feel free to be creative in your response)

APPENDIX C

OBSERVATION TOOLS

EVIDENCE OF PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP CULTURE SHEET

APPENDIX C

**OBSERVATION TOOLS – EVIDENCE OF PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP
CULTURE**

Observed artifacts: Aspects of culture revealed by what one sees, hears and feels when entering an organization.	
Classroom	School

Representations of beliefs and values	
Classroom	School

APPENDIX C

OBSERVATION TOOLS – EVIDENCE OF PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP CULTURE

Representations of underlying assumptions	
Classroom	School

Observed connections of artifacts, beliefs & values and assumptions to student learning	
Classroom	School

APPENDIX D

LETTER OF INVITATION TO SCHOOL DIVISIONS

LETTER OF INVITATION TO SCHOOL DIVISIONS

Department of Education Administration

…

_____

Re: Participation in a doctoral case study research study

Dear Mr/Ms. Last Name (Director of School Division...)

I am writing to tell you about a study being conducted via the Education Administration department at the ... As a doctoral student, I am involved in studying leadership culture in selected schools and its relationship to student learning.

The scope of the study is to consider the relationship of the *professional leadership culture* (administrators and teachers) of the school to student learning. The study will involve at least one school division that is currently implementing curriculum change (ex. literacy, numeracy, assessment, responses to intervention, subject specific, etc.) aimed at improving student learning. Within the school division a sample of one or two schools will be selected.

This study will be of benefit to all school divisions as it seeks to identify the role of leadership culture in student learning. Through this study, information, ideas and practices could be generated for sharing with other school divisions across the province and beyond.

I am seeking a director to nominate one or two schools that are undergoing instructional and curricular change. The study will involve visiting the schools several times beginning in December 2015 and continuing into 2016 in order to conduct observations, interview the leadership team and a select number of teachers about the leadership culture of their school.

At this point, I would be interested in knowing whether you would be interested in participating in this study by contacting me at the following email address: robert.liggett@usask.ca.

Please feel free to contact me if you require further information.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert S. Liggett

APPENDIX E

EMAIL LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO PRINCIPALS

Email Introduction Letter to Principal

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Administration in the college of Education ... I am conducting a case study entitled: *The Nature of the Professional Leadership Culture and its Perceived Relationship to Student Learning.*

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of school-level professionals regarding the nature of the professional leadership culture of schools and its perceived relationship to student learning. The main objective of this research is to explore the assumptions, practices beliefs and values concerning leadership among professionals in schools, by identifying the perceived nature of the professional leadership culture that exists. A second objective is to determine how professionals within these schools describe and explain the relationship between the prevailing professional leadership culture and student learning. The study has been approved on ethical grounds by the … Behavioural Science Ethics Board on <ETHICS DATE>.

From <NAME OF SCHOOL>, you have been chosen to participate as a principal who influences the professional leadership culture by participating in a face-to-face interview as well as allowing some observations of your school. All information will be kept confidential. Names of participants, their respective schools or school division will not be divulged. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured, as far as possible, through the use of pseudonyms in reference to the participants and school divisions involved in this study.

You have the right to refuse to answer any question should you feel it uncomfortable doing so. Furthermore, you have the right to withdraw your participation in this study at any point prior to the amalgamated analysis of data.

From your school, you (the principal), and five other teachers at your school are also invited to participate in individual interviews. Should you agree to participate, three teachers will be randomly selected from a staff list and a letter of introduction explaining my study will be emailed to them for their information and consent to participate. I anticipate the face-to-face interviews to be approximately one hour to one hour and a half in length. I will also be doing some observations in the school over a five-day period, observing the general operation as well as the participating teacher's classrooms. The questions that I will ask during the interview will be sent to you prior to your meeting with the researcher for interviews.

The data from this study will be used in the completion of a doctoral dissertation. The data may also be published and presented at conferences. These data will be stored in a computer file in my supervisor's computer, Dr. Pat Renihan, for five years—after which they will be destroyed.

Though I believe the benefits of this research will prove to be widely received, participant schools and the school division may particularly benefit from this study through an examination of the results and implications of the nature of the professional leadership culture of schools and its perceived relationship to student learning.

I am looking forward to your response to this request. If you are willing to participate, please reply to this letter in a return email to robert.liggett@usask.ca.

Thank you for your assistance with the study. If you are interested, I will forward you a copy of the result of the completed study.

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to contact me at 306.921.7889 or at robert.liggett@usask.ca. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Pat Renihan, professor emeritus, at pat.renihan@usask.ca.

Thank you for giving this request your attention.

Yours in education,

Robert Liggett

Department of Educational Administration
…

APPENDIX F

EMAIL LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO TEACHERS

Email Introduction Letter to Teachers

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Administration in the college of Education at the .... I am conducting a case study entitled: *The Nature of the Professional Leadership Culture and its Perceived Relationship to Student Learning.*

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of school-level professionals regarding the nature of the professional leadership culture of schools and its perceived relationship to student learning. The main objective of this research is to explore the assumptions, practices beliefs and values concerning leadership among professionals in schools, by identifying the perceived nature of the professional leadership culture that exists. A second objective is to determine how professionals within these schools describe and explain the relationship between the prevailing professional leadership culture and student learning. The study has been approved on ethical grounds by the … Behavioural Science Ethics Board on <ETHICS DATE>.

From <NAME OF SCHOOL>, you have been chosen to participate in a study relating to professional leadership and school culture. The voluntary study involves a face-to-face interview as well as allowing some observations of your classroom. All information will be kept confidential. Names of participants, their respective schools or school division will not be divulged. Confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured, as far as possible, through the use of pseudonyms in reference to the participants and school divisions involved in this study.

You have the right to refuse to answer any question should you feel uncomfortable doing so. Furthermore, you have the right to withdraw your participation in this study at any point prior to the amalgamated analysis of data.

From your school, you, the principal, and four other teachers are also invited to participate in individual interviews. I anticipate the face-to-face interviews to be approximately one hour to one hour and a half in length. I will also be doing some observations of your classroom. The questions that I will ask during the interview will be sent to you prior to your meeting with the researcher for interviews.

The data from this study will be used in the completion of a doctoral dissertation. The data may also be published and presented at conferences. These data will be stored in a computer file in my supervisor's computer, Dr. Pat Renihan, for five years—after which they will be destroyed.

Though I believe the benefits of this research will prove to be widely received, participant schools and the school division may particularly benefit from this study through an examination of the results and implications of the nature of the professional leadership culture of schools and its perceived relationship to student learning.

I am looking forward to your response to this request. If you are willing to participate, please reply to this letter in a return email to robert.liggett@usask.ca.

Thank you for your assistance with the study. If you are interested, I will forward you a copy of the result of the completed study.

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to contact me at 306.921.7889 or at robert.liggett@usask.ca. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Pat Renihan, professor emeritus, at pat.renihan@usask.ca.

Thank you for giving this request your attention.

Yours in education,

Robert Liggett

APPENDIX G

LETTER OF CONSENT FOR PERSONAL INTERVIEW PARTICIPATION

Letter of Consent for Personal Interview Participation

Name:

Position:

I hereby agree to participate in the research to be conducted by Robert Liggett entitled *The Perceived Relationship of the Professional Leadership Culture on Student Learning* under the conditions set out in the letter of introduction. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that it involves one personal interview, anticipated to be approximately one hour to one hour and a half in length. I understand that the information gathered may be used as data for publications related to this study including the researcher's dissertation. Results of the study may be presented at academic conferences or published in scholarly journals. I understand that anonymity will be maintained, as far as possible (though it cannot always be fully guaranteed in an interview situation), and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason and without any type of penalty. Names of participating individuals will not be used beyond the initial data gathering stage. I understand that I will be advised of any new information that may affect my decision to participate in this study. I understand that there are risks (e.g. psychological, emotional, legal, social) associated with studies of this nature, but that none are anticipated with participation in this research. I understand that I will be given the opportunity to review the transcribed data and that I may revise, delete or add information then sign the release form. My right to withdraw data from the study will apply until the data has been pooled. After this it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw my data. If I have any questions, I may contact the researcher, Robert Liggett, by phone at 306.921.7889 or by e-mail at robert.liggett@usask.ca

This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the … Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office (ethics.office@usask.ca or (306) 966-2975). Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

I,   , have read this form and discussed this study with the researcher. By signing this form, I give my consent to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this consent form for my personal records.

Participant signature:

Researcher signature:

Date:

APPENDIX H

LETTER OF CONSENT OF PARTICIPANT TRANSCRIPTS

APPENDIX H

Data/Transcript Release Form – Personal Interviews

I, _____ , have reviewed all of the transcribed data of my personal
interview(s) in this study and acknowledge that the transcribed data reflects what I said in
my personal interview(s) with the researcher, Robert Liggett. I hereby authorize the release
of this transcribed data to Robert Liggett to be used in the manner described in the letter of
introduction and the consent form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release
Form for my personal records.

Partcipant:

Researcher:

Date:

APPENDIX I

COLLABORATIVE INQUIRY TEAM PLANNING SHEET

CIT/TLG NOTES

Completed by each CIT/TLG three times per year as evidence of progress toward the School and CIT/TLG Goal(s)

CIT/TLG Name: Click here to enter text.
School: Click here to enter text.
Date   Click here to enter a date.

1. Review
To reinforce the purpose of our CIT/TLG process

a. What have we done since our last meeting to support our struggling learners?
Click here to enter text.

2. Share and Discuss

a. What effect have our actions had:
Click here to enter text.

3. Commit to Action

a. Next steps to support our struggling learners

Click here to enter text.