How Can I Improve My Life-Affirming, Need-Fulfilling, and Performance Enhancing Capacity to Understand and Model the Meaning of Educational Quality?

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

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Abstract

Infectious pessimism, widespread apathy, and volatile relationships: these describe the high school culture I unwittingly adopted as a first-time principal at Potsdam High School in a rural suburban town in New England. I conducted a three-year intensive self-study and participatory action research project to challenge the *status quo* definition of educational quality in American public high school as a statistical tool of ranking, separating students, and compliance. I sought through co-investigation with beneficiaries and stakeholders of public high school a life-affirming, need-fulfilling and performance-enhancing meaning of quality to challenge the *status quo* Based on action research, I created a new meta-model of the meaning of quality to guide my leadership called Transformational Quality Theory (TQT). The thesis describes how using TQT theory influenced my improvement as a school leader and educational theorist, the learning and transformation of other people, and the impact it had on improving the academic and social milieu of an impoverished American high school.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Action Research Project

What Was My Research Concern?

Keep in mind always the present you are constructing. It should be the

future you want. Alice Walker (1989)

What is the meaning of quality? Pollitt and Bouckaert (1995) noted in *Quality*

Improvement in European Public Services that quality has become a "central term in our

contemporary rhetoric" (p.3). Yet they wondered, "Is everyone really pursuing the same

objective, or do different groups have different things in mind when they adopt the

'quality' vocabulary?" (p.3). Pirsig (1974) wrote:

> Quality… you know what it is, yet you don't know what it is. But that is self-
>
> contradictory. But some things are better than others, that is, they have more
>
> quality. But when you try to say what the quality is, apart from the things that
>
> have it, it all goes poof! There's nothing to talk about. But if you can't say what
>
> Quality is, how do you know what it is, or how do you know that it even exists? If
>
> no one knows what it is, then for all practical purposes it doesn't exist at all. But
>
> for all practical purposes it really does exist…What the hell is Quality? What is it
>
> (p.184)?

This thesis tells the action research story of a collaborative and individual action

research quest to answer the question, "What is the meaning of educational quality?"

The research story illustrates the influence and impact I had on students, teachers, and

the social and academic milieu of an American public school in my role as an American

high school principal and educational researcher. I vowed to "talk the talk and walk the

walk" of being a critical theorist and take action to convert the American public high

school of which I was principal from a "place of information" into a "place of transformation" (Brooks and Brooks, 2003; Freire, 1985, 1970b; Hart, 2001; Leithwood and Jantzi, 1990). I am a critical educational theorist. This means I embrace a healthy balance between intellectualism and social change (McLaren, 1989; Kincheloe and McLaren, 2007; Shor, 1992) as the purpose of public education. Intellect should be understood in the thesis as referring to developing the skills and habits of being an effective thinker and problem solver and having the skills and knowledge relevant to the culture within which one lives (Gardner, 2000, 1993, 1991). Social change should be understood in the thesis as referring to change that leads society toward a more democratic, fair, just, imaginative and creative, caring, and humanistic way of being (Dewey, 1933, 1938/1997; Frankl, 2000, 1984; Kohl, 2004, 1998, 1994; Kohn, 1996, 1986; Kozol, 1991, Noddings, 2005 1995, 1984; Sergiovanni, 2005 1994, 1992; Watts 1997, 1971). The challenge of introducing progressive reform in the American public high school education system is formidable. They are public institutions often fraught with mistrust, power struggles, a rigid system of haves and have-nots, and a fanatical embrace of behaviourist and statistical techniques to address, assess, and promote learning and discipline (Holt, 1995; Leonard, 1991, 1987, 1978; Postman, 1969; Sizer, 1992; Spring, 1991).

I focused my efforts and actions on establishing a humanistic and critical understanding and modelling of quality in the school community for which I served as high school principal. I sought to establish a shared understanding about the meanings and dispositions of quality and set up social norms to support the agreement (Bantock, 1968; Habermas, 1984; McCarthy, 1984; Rorty, 1999). I expected this to lead to improved student and teacher learning and achievement and a more life-affirming and need-affirming school culture.

I was hired to be the principal of an academically, socially, and economically impoverished public high school in a rural New England state in the United States of America. A principal's role is to serve as the head of the school and to be responsible for all dimensions of the school's operation. In the course of the first thirty days as school principal I was overwhelmed by the high levels of interpersonal strife between students and teachers, the low regard students and teachers had of the school and of each other, and the high degree of aggressive and disrespectful behaviour. Combative and prejudicial speech by staff, students, and their parents/guardians alike was commonplace. Teacher and student conflict was at a critical level with the school's main office full of students who were ejected from their classes for misbehaviour by the end of the first hour of school almost every day. I daily confronted adult drug dealers and other non-students trespassing on school grounds. It was a social norm for students and adults to use obscenities, mock, and degrade opposing teams and their fans with fervour at school sporting events. The school's suspension rate was alarmingly high, and police visits to the school were considered a routine part of the day. An alarming fifty per cent of freshman year (UK year 9) students had failed at least one class over the past three school years before I assumed the school principalship. Freshman students accounted for approximately sixty per cent of high school discipline issues. I was a first-time principal of a school in widespread crisis. For ethical reasons, the name of the town, the school, and the names of people have been changed and will be referred to in this thesis as Potsdam, Potsdam High School, and various pseudonyms, respectively.

A statement from a high school student's parent one month (11/2005) before I assumed the principalship aptly demonstrates the impoverished state of the school:

> My family and I moved here from another district in New England and had to move after a month. My daughter was the only Hispanic girl in the school and

was tormented by her classmates and believes she was even discriminated against by her teachers!!!! When she came home crying one day I reported the harassment to the school and they replied, "There is nothing we can do about it." Also, I reported an incident of discrimination where my daughter was called a "spic" to the police department who said, "It wasn't a big deal," and was very rude to me and treated me and my family as if we were inferior. This school and the town of Potsdam are abominations to American society. Ignorance and intolerance is rampant in this poor country town with a failing school system.

I conducted a five-year action research project to generate new knowledge about how to understand and model educational quality in a life-affirming way that improved the learning of students and teachers and the social and academic milieu of an American public high school. I expected to influence people to understand and model quality in a way that transformed a public school from often a place of punishment, pessimism, and combative behaviour to a vibrant learning community that valued responsibility, optimism, hope, and peace: a school that valued a participatory approach to defining and achieving quality learning and teaching (Atweh, Kemmis and Weeks, 1998; Wheatley, 1999).

The Organising Research Question of the Thesis

The organising research question for the thesis was, "How can I improve my life-affirming and need-fulfilling capacity to understand and model the meaning of educational quality to improve the social and academic milieu of an American high school?" The focus of the research was primarily on reforming the freshman year of high school (UK year 9) because of its importance in forming students' self-identity in high school and confidence and hope for a better future. Furthermore, student poor attendance, failing courses, being retained in the ninth grade, and experiencing serious

discipline problems are germane indicators of a student at-risk for "dropping out" of school and experiencing mental distress (Monrad, 2007).

The school I worked at was not unique in having freshman consist of the highest percentage of students failing at least one class and behaviour issues that resulted in referrals to administration (Fritzer and Herbst, 1996). It was more unusual that was forty-nine per cent of the school's students failed at least one course and had to repeat it over the span of the past three years before I assumed the position as the school's principal. The small rural school of Potsdam High School (PHS) rivalled, and often exceeded, large, high-poverty, urban American high schools with high drop-out rates in having freshman fail at least one course (Kennelly and Monrad, 2007; Fritzer and Herbst, 1996).

Why I Chose a Living Educational Theory Approach to Action Research

I required a research method that would help me more deeply understand and improve how my leadership understanding and modelling of quality impacted and influenced student and teacher learning and the social and academic milieu of the school. I discovered that the work of action research experts Jean McNiff and Jack Whitehead (2009) and their concept of living education theory action research were congruent with my action research and mission. This approach to education research is a growing movement in the education research literature and is an established PhD research methodology (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001; McNiff and Whitehead, 2011).

I define living educational theory (LET) as a critical and transformational approach to action research. It demand the researcher answer the question, "How can I improve what I am doing?" Researchers using this approach must be willing to recognise and assume responsibility for being a "living contradiction" in their professional practice in thinking one way and acting another. The mission of the LET action researcher is to overcome workplace norms and behaviour that contradicts the researcher's values and beliefs. The vision of the LET researcher is to make an original contribution to knowledge through generating an educational theory proven to improve learning within a social learning space. The standard of judgement for theory validity is evidence of workplace reform, transformational growth of the researcher, and improved learning by the people the researcher claims to have influenced.

LET is focused on one essential question, "How can I improve?" (Barry, 2012c; McNiff and Whitehead, 2011, 2009, 2005; Whitehead, 2009, 2008a, 2008b,1989). Furthermore, the approach demanded that I create my own theory for quality leadership and not blindly follow the advice and dictates of "experts" of the past and present (Polanyi, 1977; Whitehead, 2010). I was intrigued by the opportunity to conduct research with a method respectful of my life experience as an educator and educational leader, which required a complementary relationship between static resources of the academic literature and the experience developed through my leadership practice and the learning and lives of other people (Whitehead, 1985). Living theory action research required me to deconstruct my leadership practice and focus on overcoming contradictions that impoverished my leadership (Barry 2012c; Whitehead, 2008a). The approach also allowed me to identify, assess, and reach conclusions about how my values and beliefs about educational quality effectively and ineffectively informed and guided my leadership practice and impacted the learning and lives of students and

teachers (Carson and Sumara, 1997).

I followed a five step process for using living educational theory research (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009):

Living Theory Action Research

Five Steps To Action Research

1. I <u>experience a concern</u> when some of my educational values are denied in my practice
2. I <u>imagine a solution</u> to the concern
3. I <u>act</u> in the direction of the imagined solution
4. I <u>evaluate</u> the outcome
5. I <u>modify my practice</u>, plans, and ideas in light of the evaluation

Action Research Project
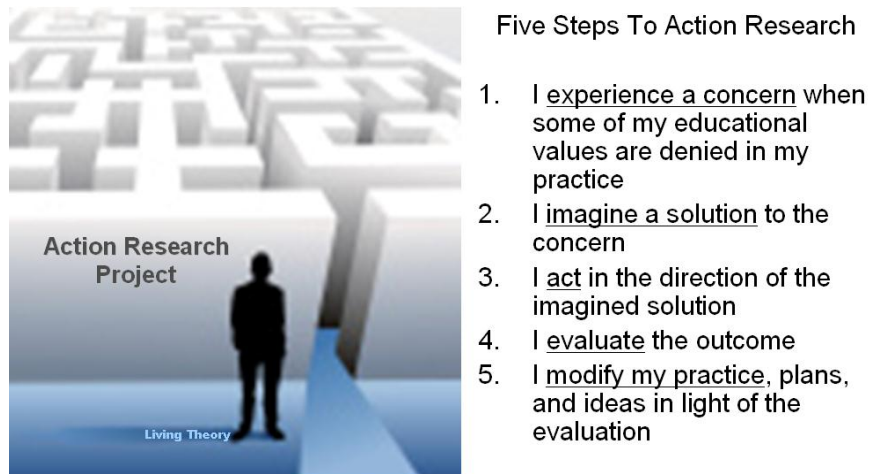
Living Theory

Fig. 1. Living theory action research

The Danger of Solipsism and/or Narcissism in Living Theory Research

A prominent challenge of using a living theory approach to research is the danger of falling victim to solipsism and/or narcissism. Essential to using living theory successfully is finding a balance between working on the transformation of oneself, influencing the learning and transformation of other people in a life-affirming way, and in transforming the social formation of the research space (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009). These requirements of living theory make it a rigorous approach to action research. I was challenged to collect and understand data and research situations from four positions (Sheldrake, 2009, 1995b, 1981): first (me), second (you), third (observing myself and you), and fourth (field). This served as a safeguard from assuming a solipsistic and/or narcissistic stance in the collection, interpretation, and generation of

data and enhanced the depth and scope of the research.

My Educational Values and Beliefs

My research is grounded in humanistic and critical theory values, which means I believe public educators and school leaders must care deeply for the humanity and health of students and encourage people through role modelling to promote equality, freedom, and justice and challenge the *status quo* (Giroux, 1997, 1983; Freire, 1970a, 1970b; Hooks, 1994; Postman, 1969). I believe a student's search for meaning (Glasser, 2002, 1998; Frankl, 2000) is the most important goal of education. I believe aiming toward an "I-You/We" (Freire, 1998) was the best way to approach interpersonal relationships (Barry, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). This is opposed to "I-It/Them" orientation toward other people whereby people interact without witnessing each other's humanity and address each other in a *quid pro quo* manner.

I conducted the research study cognisant that my perceptions of data generation and the world at large were influenced by my orientation toward life: a heterosexual, middle-aged, middle-class, Christian-raised, highly educated male Caucasian from an affluent New England area (Hooks, 1994). This awareness influenced me to work closely with critical friends and validation groups while welcoming public scrutiny during the action research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) to assess if and how my influences coloured my understanding and interpretation of data and how I could improve.

My Epistemological Values

I am most in agreement with the constructivists and postmodernist school of thought concerning the human orientation toward knowledge acquisition. The epistemological and values choices I make are relative; however, it is important to note there are value judgements as an American citizen I do not treat as relative. American culture defines right or wrong in relation to a democratic way of life. The American

democratic way of life is premised on the values that a person does not have the right to infringe or impede upon "God-given" rights, as specified in the U.S. Constitution (1787), which afforded American citizens "the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." This system of "God-given rights," is admittedly relative to the culture of which I am a member. It is in this relative societal context I live and work and am expected to honour in my practice and dealing with other people. This element of my position of thought is contradictory to the tenets of postmodernism, but I fully realise I am a "living contradiction" (Whitehead and McNiff, 2009) in my existence as a human being and search with curiosity and passion ways in which I can improve congruency in my thought and actions. I did not follow postmodern thought blindly. I am, rather, heavily influenced by it.

Knowledge is constructed and not simply unearthed as an objective thing in itself. Knowledge is contingent, relative, and always in a state of refinement. Therefore, educators need to problematize knowledge so as to not promote false ideology and myth and be misled by simulacra (Baudrillard, 2001, 1994; Foucault, 1980; Freire, 2001, 1985). Knowledge is never absolute. It is always relative. The most important questions I considered when interpreting a knowledge claim for this research were, "Whom does this knowledge benefit and hurt, and what can I do to improve or substantiate a knowledge claim?"

My epistemological values revolve around a belief in the tentative nature of knowledge. Without a knower there is no such thing as knowledge. People cannot gain knowledge as they would receive money and put it in the bank. Freire (1970b) called this type of approach to knowledge as the "banking concept of education." We do not receive knowledge in a virgin state and store it in the brain as objective information about a static reality. Knowledge is messy, constantly evolving, and contingent on a

knower's perspective because a static reality does not exist (Baudrillard, 2001). In the thesis I claim to have discovered through co-investigation and self-reflection something unique about educational quality that added meaningfully to the sum of human knowledge about the meaning of educational quality.

I perceived my role as an American public school principal to promote student and teacher questioning of ideology, unquestioned belief systems and assumptions, and the *status quo* because they are inextricable from the democratic concepts of freedom, equality, and justice American culture is founded. People are not free if treated as passive recipients of knowledge.

My Phenomenological-Hermeneutical Approach to Understanding

I chose a phenomenological-hermeneutic methodology as the philosophical lenses I used to "see" the world. This is a sophisticated way of saying I embraced an approach to understanding that takes into account my preconceptions as filters of "reality." I initially approached interviews, interactions with other people, and texts phenomenologically by noting my preconceptions, trying to "bracket" them from my observations (Husserl, 1969) and seeking to experience other people and experiences of the world from an unbiased perspective. After reaching insight using the phenomenological perspective, I assumed a hermeneutical approach to understanding set in a belief in critical theory and humanistic education. I looked for insight with the intent of generating new knowledge about improving my understanding of the meaning of quality for the improvement of learning, development, and performance.

I think of phenomenology (Heidegger, 1962, 1982; Husserl, 1969; Merleau-Ponty, 1965, 1964, 1962; Sartre, 2007, 1962, 1948) like a photograph. It is a snapshot of experience. The photograph represents the way a moment was experienced. The picture is a *representation* and *description* of what was seen and experienced. Hermeneutics

(Gadamer, 1999, 1983; Grudin, 1996; Husserl, 1969; Habermas, 1984; McCarthy, 1984) is sitting down with the "pictures' and *interpreting/judging* them so as to decide their worth to be included in a "photo album," tucked away in a drawer or discarded. The photo album can be seen as a metaphor for how we choose to remember experience in the short and long term. The interpretation of that experience, choosing which pictures to represent a past experience officially in the photo album, illuminates the construction of reality in the mind.

When I used phenomenology I was listening to others or observing situations in the school culture while taking into account personal bias and thus gaining a *thick description* of the other people's perceptions and experience. I bracketed my everyday filters for reality and looked at things with "virgin" eyes, or a "Martian's eye view" (Diedrick, 2004). Of course, this technically was impossible to do in a purist sense; however, it was worth the effort by raising my awareness of my interpretative filters and being able to experience the information from alternative vantage points. The purpose of hermeneutics is to create an explanation of experience, whereas the purpose of phenomenology is to create a description of experience.

My Understanding and Passion for Critical Theory and Humanistic Education

My understanding of humanistic education (Bushnell, 1996) is that first and foremost it is student-centred. It is education that puts students' needs first and bureaucratic institutional needs second. It considers the *status quo* as always in need of questioning and possible revising. It is education that helps people learn basic skills and knowledge so as to optimize their potential to be self-actualized, free, and critical thinkers. I passionately believe education should start with a student's understanding of the world and what that student needs to be a free and self-directed person (Dewey, 1938; Maslow, 1968; Moffat, 1994; Palmer, 1993; Zohar and Marshall, 1999). There is

great evidence that the human brain intrinsically has a plethora of different intelligences to help people to understand and navigate the world successfully (Csikszentmihalyi, 1998; Egan, 1997; Gardner, 2000, 1991, 1985; Grof and Bennett, 1992; Lazear, 1991; Leonard and Murphy, 1995; Lovelock, 1979; Wilber, 2007, 1998a).

I sought in this action research project to promote a school culture sensitive to identifying quality as a concept that rejected domination, oppression, and unjust treatment of members of the school for which I served as principal (Freire, 1998, 1985, 1970b; Glasser, 1998; Kincheloe and McLaren, 2007; Kohn, 2011, 1999; Noddings, 2005; Rogers, 1980, 1969). My understanding of critical theory and humanistic education was influenced by a bevy of writers who illuminated the importance of questioning and challenging the *status quo* and seeking social justice. I became more aware of the intricate and critical relationship between politics, power, and knowledge generated within a school community (Foucault, 1980; Apple, 1996). I realized as I deconstructed (Ball, 2009; Derrida, 2003; Foucault, 1980; Jardine, 2005) my work as a high school principal my educational values and beliefs were often denied by the expectations of being an American public high school principal (Whitehead, 1993; McNiff and Whitehead, 2000). Neil Postman's (1969) work helped me to realize that the *status quo* of public high school education often sends a message contradictory to humanistic/critical education practice. Krishnamurti's (1995) message that education is in essence a search for meaning deeply affected me and led me to the work of psychoanalyst Viktor Frankl (1984). Frankl's (2000) belief that the greatest challenge for humanity is a search for meaning resonated with me and affected the way I perceived leadership and teaching.

My view of humanistic education is that it effectively facilitates students' search for meaning and fosters students' skill and ability to challenge and improve upon the *status quo*. The guidance of such writers as Henry Giroux (1997, 1983), Michael Apple

(1999, 1996, 1982), Ira Shor (1992), and Paul Tillich (2000) illuminated new territory for me to explore to improve my leadership as a humanistic principal who role-modelled my beliefs and values as a critical theorist. From Giroux's declaration that we must transcend the destructive culture of positivism, where prediction and control rule the day, to education that is progressive and promotes freedom; to Apple's identification of education as a political process of enculturation into the *status quo* and promotes inequality; to Shor's challenge for educators to embrace dialogically based teaching rather than authoritative methods: these writers challenged me to improve my practice, and I took them up on the challenge.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming

Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is most succinctly defined as the art and science of human excellence. "Its purpose is to remove blockages and enable results-oriented change through better interaction with other people" (Kay and Kite, 2009, p.1). NLP is concerned with discovering and emulating the patterns of human excellence and discovering and emulating the way effective people think and communicate (Bandler and Grinder, 1983, 1979, 1975; Dilts, 1996; Blyth and Heron, 2011; O'Conner and Seymour,1990).

NLP was born in the 1970s from the minds of then-assistant professor of linguistics John Grinder and Richard Bandler (1975), at the time a university student of psychology. Their collaborative goal was to identify patterns used by outstanding therapists and articulate these patterns for people to use for improvement in meeting their own and other people's needs. Specifically, they based their research on the work of three notable therapists: Virginia Satir (1916-1988), renowned family therapist, Milton Erikson (1901-1980), internationally known hypnotherapist, and Fritz Perls (1893-1970), the founder of Gestalt therapy.

The term "neuro-linguistic programming" references three key areas of study. The "neuro" refers to the fact that all of our behaviour emanates from neurological processes. The "linguistic" refers to the fact we use language to order our thoughts and behaviour. It is what allows us to communicate with other people. The "programming" refers to the choices we humans have in organizing our thoughts and actions to produce the actions we desire.

> NLP deals with the structure of human subjective experience; how we organize what we see hear and feel and how we edit and filter the outside world through our senses. It also explores how we describe it in language and how we act, both intentionally and unintentionally, to produce results. (O'Connor and Seymour, 1990, p.3-4)

NLP is an apt lens through which to approach the research because it explores how to understand and model the meaning of quality in order to promote personal effectiveness, rapport with others, and motivation to succeed. As a certified practitioner of NLP, I have personally witnessed the powerful effect NLP can have on student achievement and teacher effectiveness through identifying and accurately interpreting body language and linguistic cues. I used NLP as an important tool in the study for interpreting data and generating new knowledge about how people can and do attain excellence in their professional and personal lives through their understanding and modelling of quality. I focused specifically on using NLP in the research as a way of increasing my awareness and competency in accurately interpreting peoples' verbal and non-verbal communication.

Spiral Dynamics

Traditionally, quality's meaning in student learning and teacher effectiveness has been based on quantitative assessments and cooperative and subservient behaviour,

such as homework completion and attendance rates, level of subservience to those in power positions, and test and quiz performance. I believed these behavioural indicators of quality were largely invalid, except for attendance, and were the main culprit in impoverishing the meaning and modelling of quality in American public high school education.

Spiral dynamics is both a conceptual and pragmatically applicable system that explores the deep values that support people's values and beliefs and how they choose to orient themselves toward other people and the world. In essence, it is a model of people's emergent thinking systems that helps them successfully navigate the world. Fundamentally, spiral dynamics is a holistic and comprehensive model for understanding peoples' thinking, their behaviour, and how to deal successfully with human conflicts. This method of understanding has been validated by over two decades of research (Beck and Cowan, 1996) and has been reportedly used in conflict-resolution situations of such magnitude as the South African apartheid conflict (Beck and Cowan, 1996).

Graves (1914-1986), whose untimely death prevented him from publishing his ideas in depth, was passionately interested in individuals, social groups, and society's surface value systems. He believed surface values are a primary cause of conflict between people and groups of people. For example, Jews conflicting violently with Palestinians and the conflict in Northern Ireland are macro examples, and conflicts between teachers and administrators, students with teachers, and students with other students in a public school are micro examples.

Graves believed that the examination of both the deep values and surface values demonstrated a choice by the value holder to be operating in one of two forms of action: either individually focused or group-focused. It is important to note that individual

15

focus does not necessitate being ego-focused. As will be shown, one may be individually focused for the very means of diminishing ego-centred thinking and acting (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993 and 1990). Graves promoted the idea that human beings evolve through different stages of bio-psycho-social-spiritual development, with people going through the spiral alternating between individually focused and group-focused stages as they evolve.

Understanding and modelling the meaning of quality necessitates an understanding of both the surface and deep values of people. Through recognising the core values from which a person primarily operates, it is often possible to identify the internal forces that ultimately shape how and why individuals, schools, and communities understand and model quality the way they do.

Standards of Judgement

I offer this thesis for public validation as an original contribution to the education research literature (McNiff, Whitehead and Lomax, 2009). The validity of the study is based on the transparency of how my living theory of quality educational leadership led to tangible improvements in the learning of students, teachers, and sport coaches (coaches) and to the social and academic milieu of the school. The standards by which I ask to be judged to validate my research are:

1. Evidence my living theory of understanding and modelling education quality was tested by public scrutiny and found to be and effective map and guide for understanding how students, teachers, and coaches understand, experience, and model the meaning of quality in the milieu of Potsdam High School;

2. Evidence the use of my living theory of understanding and modelling educational quality resulted in higher levels of student and teacher achievement,

as evidenced by a reduction in the failure rate of freshman (year 14) students, less incidents of conflict and serious discipline issues between students and their teachers and coaches;

3. Evidence the use of my living theory of understanding and modelling of educational quality resulted in transformation of my leadership practice so as to have less contradiction between my actions and decision and my values and beliefs; and

4. Evidence the use of my living theory of understanding and modelling of educational quality resulted in transformation of the social and academic milieu of the school.

The Potential Significance of the Study

I problematized my own practice as a public school education leader through rigorous reflection of how and why I made significant leadership decisions about quality and whom those decisions most benefitted and whom they most hurt. The education research literature has a disappointingly small amount of PhD-level living theory action research based on school leaders who problematized their own practice and examined contradictions between their practice and beliefs and values. There is, however, a notable depth of living theory action research conducted by teachers at the PhD level (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010, 2006; McNiff, 2002). The change in one person's behaviour or perspective of the world can affect the behaviour and perspective of countless others (Sheldrake, 2009, 1995b).This study, therefore, is a unique and significant contribution to the literature concerning school leader living theory action research.

My Claim to Generating New Educational Knowledge

The thesis supports my claim that I have generated new knowledge about the

meaning of educational quality in school leadership. It is knowledge I gained from a synthesis of public evaluation and my explanation of my leadership. This knowledge led me to accept responsibility for those times in my leadership where I acted in contradiction to my values and beliefs. By understanding my educational development more deeply I was able to create new knowledge that improved my practice as a quality educational leader and helped me understand more deeply the needs of the people I served. This allowed me to model an understanding of quality that successfully met people's needs. Through an iterative process of receiving critical feedback from participants during all dimensions of the research, my claim to knowledge is based on social validation from people directly affected by my efforts to improve my understanding and modelling of educational quality.

Organisation of the Thesis

I have organised the research narrative of the thesis into seven chapters. In the first chapter, "Introduction to the Action Research Project," I made explicit my research concerns about the impoverished social and academic milieu of the American high school of which I became principal. I outline my concerns for improving the learning of students, teachers, and coaches and reforming the organization and operation of the school through the concept of "transformational quality." In chapter two, "My Methodological Orientation and Method Choices for Using Living Theory Action Research as a Way to Generate New Knowledge about the Meaning of Quality in American Public Education," explains the methodology and methods I used in the study to collect, interpret, and generate data. The chapter describes the influence my methodological choices had on my perception of the data and the research situation. In chapter three, "Education Influences on My Values and Beliefs Regarding Educational Quality: The Background Story of the Thesis—A Historical Fictional Tale," I use the

qualitative research tool of fiction storytelling to describe and explain meaningful and relevant subtleties and political overtones involved in the living theory action research project. The use of fiction storytelling allowed me the freedom to describe subtle sub-plots and the power of the *status quo* in ways that accentuated the importance of the study to the educational literature. This chapter presents a critical review of the literature that has influenced and inspired me and shaped my thinking. I document my educational influences and respect for the thinkers before my time and of the modern day.

In chapter four, "Challenging the Status Quo: The Introduction of Transformational Quality (TQ) Theory," I seek to discover how beneficiaries and stakeholders of American public education understood, recognised, and modelled the meaning of quality. In the chapter I discuss a new life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing way to understand and model the meaning of quality in public high school education practice and leadership. I based this new understanding and modelling of quality on data I collected through semi-structured interviews with 264 beneficiaries and stakeholders from four New England public high schools, two of which I served as a school leader. I created Transformational Quality (TQ) theory based on triangulating the data from the interviews, my own professional observations, and the educational affiliated literature. TQT emerged as new knowledge about how best to understand and model the meaning of quality in pedagogy, sport coaching, and school leadership. The next two chapters of the study tested the validity my living theory of quality as I used it in praxis in a small rural-suburban high school in coastal New England, USA, where I served as principal.

In the chapter five, "Using Transformational Quality (TQ) Theory as a Guide to Developing and Fostering Creativity, Resiliency, and Optimism in Myself and Other

People During All-Encompassing Social, Academic, and Institutional School Reform," I set out TQT as a valid, legitimate, and morally acceptable organising idea for understanding and modelling educational quality in the school at which I served as principal. I analyse and assess my personal growth as a quality educational leader though my development and use of TQT in praxis. I reflect on the contradictions in my practice during the different case studies and evidence of improvement in greater consistency in my leadership. I demonstrate how my living theory for understanding and modelling quality led to the improved learning of students, teachers, and coaches, the transformation of the social and academic formation of the school for which I was principal, and the improvement of congruence between my educational values and beliefs and the leadership in praxis.

In the chapter, I demonstrate how I used TQT as guide to confront teacher and sport coaching bullying successfully, eliminating the demarcation between the "haves' and "have-nots', fixing a troublesome achievement gap, challenging behaviourist/positivistic teaching and assessment methods, improving a low school moral, and eliminating the social injustice of prejudicial ranking and sorting of students by perceived intelligence level. Sadly, these kinds of problems are endemic in public high schools across America (Apple, 1996; Giroux, 1997, 1983; Glasser, 1998; Kincheloe, 2001, 1993; Leonard, 1978; Postman, 1969; Shor, 1992; Sizer, 1992; Spring, 1991). I came to the conclusion the source of the problem at Potsdam High School was an embedded cultural norm not to challenge the *status quo*. I believed this was a direct contributor to the high level of oppression, misbehaviour, and interpersonal challenges in the school culture.

The *status quo* for student groupings for instruction was most often selected according to teachers' and school officials' determination of intelligence level. Potsdam

High School had five levels of class groupings: advanced placement, honours, college prep, non-college prep, and skills. As a customary practice, the same teachers taught the same level students each year. For instance, one teacher taught "highly intelligent" students and another taught "lower intelligence" students in non-college prep classes. The most veteran teachers traditionally taught the high level and college prep classes, and the younger, less experienced teachers taught the low ability and skills classes.

By design, the school community oppressed less skilled students with low expectations and superficial learning. Additionally, the school had no written curriculum guide in any subject approved by school officials. The lack of curriculum guides for classroom learning made it difficult to hold teachers accountable for promoting meaningful and critical learning. There was no way to validate systematically that student assessments of learning meant students had learned anything of worth. In the chapter, I examine my leadership influence, using my living theory of quality as a guide, to create a freshman year learning community based on collaboration, optimism, and competency, rather than on the *status quo* of ranking and sorting students. My research focused on reform at the freshman year (year 14) level and the impact of the reform on student and teacher learning, the social formation of the school, and my transformation as a school leader.

In chapter six, "Dissemination and Impact: Evaluating My Claim to an Original Contribution to Knowledge," I examine how I successfully fulfilled the living standards of judgement set for the research and reflected on my research journey from beginning to end. I examine why I succeeded and failed in resolving contradictions in my understanding and modelling of quality in meeting the needs of students, teachers, and coaches and in transforming the social and academic formation of the school. I demonstrate how the new knowledge I created about understanding and modelling

quality was validated by public scrutiny and empirical evidence. Implications for further research to improve the need-fulfilling capacity of American public high schools are proposed. I explain how the generation of new knowledge about understanding and modelling quality in a public education context has implications for improving education leadership in democratic and socialistic countries throughout the world.

In chapter seven, "Assessment of My Use of TQT as a Guide for School Leadership," I discuss the effectiveness of TQT as a guide for my school leadership and visions for future research about TQT to strengthen its validity, reliability, and usability from a global perspective across different disciplines. I discuss my assessment of needs for further research regarding TQT and my vision for how these needs for further research can be best met. I end the chapter with concluding remarks about the research journey and process that resulted in my transformation as a leader.

CHAPTER TWO

My Methodological Orientation and Method Choices for Using Living Theory Action Research as a Way to Generate New Knowledge about the Meaning of Quality in American Public Education

Introduction

Once upon a time there was a man who strayed from his own century into the world known as the Land of Fools.

He soon saw a number of people fleeing in terror from a field where they had been trying to reap wheat. "There is a monster in that field!" they told him. He looked and saw that it was a watermelon.

He offered to kill the "monster" for them. When he had cut the melon from the stalk, he took a slice and began to eat it. The people became even more terrified of him than they had been of the melon. They drove him away with pitchforks, crying, "He will kill us next, unless we get rid of him!"

It so happened that at another time another man also strayed into the Land of Fools, and the same thing started to happen to him. But, instead of offering to help them with the "monster," he agreed with them that it must be dangerous, and by tiptoeing away from it with them he gained their confidence. He spent a long time with them in their houses until he could teach them, little by little, the basic facts which would enable them not only to lose their fear of melons, but even to cultivate them themselves. (Shah, 1977, p.227)

This tale highlights that unintended destructive results are more likely to occur than not when a leader does not understand, or ignores, the value and belief system of people and their sense of identity. When a leader takes the time to understand the value

and belief system of people and their sense of identity and works in concert with them, the results are optimised to be productive and life-affirming. I started my principalship at Potsdam High School (PHS) in fashion similar to the first man in the Sufi tale above. I perceived it foolish for people in the school and local community to be afraid of changing the impoverished social and academic milieu of the school. Like the man in the first part of the tale, I thought the task simple and straightforward. I would demonstrate there was nothing to fear in improving the school community through progressive reform and improved performance of students, teachers, and coaches. To my surprise, I suffered the same initial fate as the first man in the tale. The people I aimed to most help rallied in protest to "chase me out of town." I came to understand my approach was an error in judgement. I altered my approach and sought to be like the second man in the Sufi tale. I aimed to gain the confidence of students, teachers, and coaches so as to influence improvement in learning and in the social and academic milieu of the school.

Living Educational Theory: The Umbrella Method of the Study

"Education is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember

from time to time that nothing that is worth learning can be taught."

Oscar Wilde (Ackoff and Greenberg, 2008, p.3)

The guiding action research question of the thesis was, "How can I improve my life-affirming and need-fulfilling capacity to understand and model the meaning of educational quality to improve the social and academic milieu of the school I serve as principal?" The meaning I ascribed to "life affirming" was critical questioning of the *status quo* when it impoverished human "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," rights guaranteed and protected by the American Constitution (1787). I also understood the meaning of "life affirming" to include when I witnessed another person as a

24

meaningful embodiment of life through authentic listening, personalized communication, and a genuine effort to meet the quality needs of other people. The general meaning I ascribed to "need-fulfilling" was in concert with Glasser's (1998) belief that human beings have five basic needs: love, power, fun, freedom, and survival.

I looked for an approach to life-affirming educational action research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Hendricks, 2008; Merriam, 2009, 2001 McNiff, 2002) that validated my experience as a school leader and honoured the voices of participants in enacting person-centred pedagogical and school culture change. I found the appropriate approach for this new scholarship (Schön, 1995) through Jack Whitehead's (1996) construct of living educational theory (LET). It is action research concerned about understanding the complex process of improving professional practice through a cyclical method of action and reflection for the purpose of answering the question, "How can I improve in praxis?" In Whitehead's (2010) living theory version of action research, the most important questions an educational living theory researcher asks are:

- What am I doing?

- How do improve what I am doing to influence and impact other people and the social formation of the learning environment in a positive and progressive way?

- How does the evidence of my influence and impact on other people show I sometimes act as a "living contradiction" in opposition to my values and beliefs?

- How can I improve in demonstrating congruency in my educational practice?

LET is a critical and transformational approach to action research. It urges the researcher to challenge the *status quo* of their educational practice and to answer the

question, "How can I improve what I am doing?" Researchers who use this approach must be willing to recognise and assume responsibility for being a "living contradiction" in their professional practice in thinking one way and acting in another. The mission of the LET action researcher is to improve self-influencing behaviour and thinking that contradict the researcher's values and beliefs. The vision of the LET researcher is to make an original contribution to knowledge through generating an educational theory proven to improve the learning of people within a social learning space. The standard of judgement for theory validity is evidence of workplace reform, transformational growth of the researcher, and improved learning by the people the researcher claimed to have influenced. The LET approach has been successfully used by action researchers across the globe at the PhD level.

The living theory approach (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010) requires rigorous standards for assessing the validity of an action research project. It requires evidence beyond external validation made though public scrutiny. It is equally about the transformation of researchers in their practice into more consistently life-affirming people in their decisions, thoughts, and deeds (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006; Whitehead, 2011). I carried out this action research project for the purpose of transforming myself into a more consistently life-affirming leader. The living theory approach shows profound respect for the educational researcher as an agent of educational change and improvement (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011). This approach demands deep introspection on the part of the researcher and requires a high level of maturity as the researcher is asked to seek out and acknowledge areas in which mistakes were made and situations where the researcher violated his or her own values and beliefs in his or her thinking, actions, and decisions (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006). A challenge of using living educational theory was having the willingness to view myself

as a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989) and identify areas in my leadership where my values and beliefs were being denied both by the *status quo* expectations of my position as an American public high school principal and by my own volition (Whitehead, 1993).

LET is based on the idea that I have a theory about what I am doing as an education leader (McNiff, et al., 2004) and can validate it through evidence that I improved other people's learning and the social formation of the learning workplace. Living educational theory research is influenced by, but not beholden to, the authority of experts in the various disciplines of knowledge. I did not let academic theories in the literature replace the practical principles I used to explain my education life as a school leader (Polanyi, 2009). I was inspired by, not beholden to, academic theories of the past that helped guide my leadership practice. Living theory is based on an action researcher's creating new knowledge gained from professional praxis (Whitehead, 2009; Whitehead and McNiff, 2003). As Whitehead (2008) stated, "I work with Michael Polanyi's (1958) decision about personal knowledge. This is a decision to understand the world from my own point of view as an individual claiming originality and exercising judgment responsibly with universal intent" (p. 107).

I identified what Whitehead (2008b) referred to in the research process as "narrative wreckage" when I was challenged to take responsibility for my negative emotions and thoughts and to rechannel the negativity into life-affirming thoughts and action. Narrative wreckage provided me a glimpse of a clearer, rawer, and more honest reflection of my sense of self and how I influenced the learning and lives of people both positively and negatively through my modelling of self (Frank, 1995). Whitehead (2008b) wrote of the importance of acknowledging narrative wreckage in action research:

I am aware of the importance of including some narrative wreckage in the story

of a life well-lived. I am thinking of the kind of narrative wreckage that involves a lack of recognition. A smooth story of self might (Maclure, 1996, p.282) initially feel comfortable to a listener, but without the acknowledgment of what has been involved in persisting in the face of pressure, a story can lack authenticity. p. 5)

My role as a living theory researcher required me to deconstruct my leadership decisions and behaviour in the action research process and ask:

- At what cost have I achieved my objective(s)?

- When and why did I act and think in ways incongruent with my values and beliefs?

- How can I improve?

- How will I know if I improve?

- How can I improve my resiliency in times of pressure and negativity?

The living theory approach required I produced evidence to demonstrate that I influenced the learning of people and that this evidence was validated by the people I claimed to have influenced (Habermas, 1976; McNiff and Whitehead, 2002, 2000). The approach required me to take a critical stance toward my influence on students, teachers, and coaches and embrace the concept of "reflexivity" in my researcher role (Stanley and Wise, 1993; Maynard and Purvis, 1994; Mason, 1996; Schratz and Walker, 1995; Shacklock and Smyth, 1998; Ellis and Flaherty, 1992). Mason (1996) defined "reflexivity" succinctly:

Qualitative research should involve critical self-scrutiny by the researcher, or active reflexivity. This means that the researcher should constantly take stock of their actions and their role in the research process, and subject these to the same critical scrutiny as the rest of their

"data". The basis for this belief is that a researcher cannot be neutral, or objective, or detached, from the knowledge and evidence they are generating. Instead, they should seek to understand their role in that process. Indeed the very act of posing difficult questions to oneself in the research process is part of the activity of reflexivity. (p.6).

My reflexive role as a researcher led me to a deeper understanding of myself, the influence I had on the people involved in the research process (Mason, 1996), and the transformational nature of the research (Cresswell, 2007; Daresh, 2001).

Seeking Answers to My Action Research Concerns through Living Theory Case Studies and Critical Incidents

"Education is a social process; education is growth; education is

not a preparation for life, but is life itself." John Dewey (1859-1952)

In the first living theory case study (chapter four of the thesis) I sought to create a new framework for understanding and modelling educational quality congruent with the humanistic and critical values and beliefs that underpin a democratic way of life in America. I conducted 264 semi-structured interviews with New England public high school students, teachers, and coaches about their "maps' for understanding, recognising, and modelling quality. I used triangulation between data collected from semi-structured interviews, personal observations and experiences of quality, or lack thereof, recorded in my research journal, and a review of pertinent literature to create an improved framework for understanding and modelling educational quality in the public high school for which I served as principal. I called this new framework Transformational Quality (TQ) theory.

In the second and third living theory case studies of the thesis (chapter five) I used TQT to influence students and teachers to challenge the *status quo* understanding

and modelling of quality as ranking students against each other, separating students into groups of "have" and "have-nots' through levels of homogenous grouped classes (From "smartest" to "least smart"), punitive punishment, excessive importance placed on homework, and a "banking" approach to student learning whereby teachers are depositors of knowledge into the passive minds of students (Freire, 1970b). I took action to influence the school community to accept a life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing orientation toward quality's meaning, which illuminated the *status quo* as impoverishing human life and learning.

Three critical incidents arose from the reform process I initiated through the case studies. These critical incidents required I improve my sense of resiliency in the face of great opposition and chaos. The first critical incident number one deals with teacher misbehaviour and bullying of other people. The second deals with the use of homophobic and prejudicial language by a coach as a motivational tool. The third deals with the firing of my boss, the superintendent, partially caused because of her support of the reforms I initiated in this action research project.

As discussed in chapter one, I used Whitehead's (2009) recommended five-step process for guiding living theory action research for each case study. I liked the five-step process because it provided me with an efficient and structured way to stay focused on my essential research question of, "How can I improve?" and not become side-tracked into peripheral research areas. McNiff and Whitehead (2009) created nine questions to ask within this process to ensure depth and breadth in the research process:

1. What was my concern?

2. Why was I concerned?

3. How can I show what the situation was like initially?

4. What could I do? What did I do?

5.   How did I gather data to show on-going developments?

6.   What did I find out?

7.   How could I show that any conclusion I came to were reasonably fair and accurate?

8.   How could I articulate the significance of my action research?

9.   How did I modify my ideas and practices in light of my evaluation? (p.56).

I integrated the nine questions into the five step process for each case study of the thesis.

Data Collection Methods and Techniques

I used a composite approach of semi-structured interviews, journal writing (documenting personal observations, metacognition, and intuitive ruminations), and document and literature review to collect data within each case study of the thesis. I chose the semi-structured interview tool (Kvale, 2009; Seidman, 2006; Weiss, 1995) because it provided participants a safe space freely to express and elaborate upon their values and beliefs about the meaning of quality. I paid close attention to building rapport and monitoring people's body language, tonality, and pacing to assess congruence between a person's vocalized communication and their non-verbal communication.

Each semi-structured interview, because of the nature of using open-ended questions, had its own nuances. This made the data collected non-standardized in some ways. I purposely sought information that had depth and breadth and accurately represented the value and belief system of participants. The nuances of different interviews allowed a reasonable degree of non-standardization, which strengthened the validity of the data I collected from participants.

The one weakness to which I fell victim repeatedly in pilot studies was giving participants cues of approval or disapproval through my body language and speech

signals. I overcame this in this study. In listening to taped interviews from the pilot

studies, I identified I often change my tone when liking something I heard and lowered

it when I disliked a reply or hadn't been able to establish rapport with someone. I asked

for a critical friend, an award-winning school psychologist in the state, to observe me as

I conducted some of the interviews. She was highly skilled in paying attention to the

nuances of language and behaviour and its influence and impact on people. She

informed me my use of body language and tonality changes was revealing my level of

interest and agreement or my level of displeasure. I improved through concentrated

practice of being aware and effectively monitoring awareness of non-verbal and verbal

cues during interviews and was careful to avoid unduly influencing participants'

responses.

The most difficult possible weakness to defend was the possibility that

participants lied to me. It is extremely difficult to prove, without a shadow of doubt, that

someone was honest and truthful. My training as a practitioner of neuro-linguistic

programming helped me to become highly skilled in accurately assessing the impact

and meaning of speech change, word usage, and body language in communication. A

person's non-verbal and verbal cues and body language are inextricably linked to the

meaning of their communication. I noted in my research journal when I observed

dissonance in a person's communication, the reasons why I believed it dissonant, and

how that influenced my interpretations of the information being communicated to me.

Information collected, however, was never dismissed from the study regardless of my

interpretations and assessments.

I used public scrutiny, feedback from critical friends, validation groups, semi-

structured interviews, and the local and national media as substantiation of my influence

and impact, be it positive or negative, on the learning of students, teachers, and coaches

and the social and academic milieu of the school. I describe the specific interpretive

lenses I used to collect, assess, reach conclusions, and generate data during the action

research project in the following sections of the chapter.

My Understanding and Use of Phenomenological and Hermeneutical Research Methodologies and Methods

"Some philosophy is dry and obscure, some brilliant and

convincing. But the best philosophy of all is helpful." (Robert Grudin

1996, p.116)

My interpretive lenses for the action research altered between phenomenological

and hermeneutic approaches. In other words, I embraced an approach to understanding

that took into account the effect of my preconceptions on the interpretation of

information both to describe and explain experience. In order for me to express more

precisely what I mean by this composite approach, I describe and explain how

phenomenology and hermeneutics were conceptualised and used as research

methodologies and methods in my thesis and in the influence of prominent thinkers on

my understanding.

My Use of the Phenomenological Approach to Research

In plain language, phenomenology is more concerned with describing and

organising experience than with explaining it. It is concerned with eliminating

assumptions, being aware of personal bias, and becoming more aware and sensitive to

the complexities and simplicities of experience. I used phenomenology to describe and

interpret what people associated with the meaning of quality in American public

education. Assuming a phenomenological approach required patience. I had to listen

intently, take notice of body language, tonality, other non-verbal cues, and be aware of

the nuances of the research situation. I had to silence my inner voice, which

instinctively wanted to judge and offer opinions and interpretations regarding my observations.

Phenomenology asks the researcher to earnestly try to see the world "as it appears to be" and to discover the common experience people have in relation to a shared phenomenon. The researcher chooses a phenomenon of study, in my case "educational quality," and proceeds to collect data from participants who have experienced and/or felt the effects of the phenomenon. The researcher develops a mosaic-like understanding of the different experiences of the phenomenon and seeks to describe the essence of each person's experience into a cohesive whole by looking for commonality across the population. The descriptions answer the questions, "What was experienced?" and "How was it experienced" (Moustakas, 1995)? Phenomenology is concerned with the description of things with minimal focus on explanation and analysis and trying to see the world as it appears to be (Moustakas, 1990). Reality is understood as being relational between a person and a phenomenon, and the researcher generally assumes a second-order perspective. Unlike a first-order approach, which the researcher describes a phenomenon as he or she interprets it personally, the second-order approach describes a phenomenon from the perspective of another person or from an unbiased fourth position. However, this is not possible according to recent attitudes in modern science. Quantum physics, as well as sociological research, shows our observation of anything in the world has an effect upon what is observed (Capra, 2010, 1996; Gribbin, 1984; McTaggart, 2011, 2008a, 2008b; Zukav, 2001). I did not consider phenomenology to be real in an ontological sense. I believe it was a helpful epistemological tool in constructing holistic understanding.

For instance, when I was coaching a high school, or youth, baseball team, there were often moments I found myself phenomenologically observing the game. I

bracketed my preconceptions and judgements of players, umpires, and the other coaches involved in the game and become a (relatively) unattached viewer. I was trying to see the game as it was without my interpretation to colour it. Interestingly, Sokolowski (2000) explained phenomenology by comparing it to the experience of being at a baseball game. It is an apt comparison. To see the authentic game as played from a phenomenological perspective, and to be able to describe it, I can try to describe what happened on the field of play without adding biased interpretations and making judgements. I can validate my description of the "authentic" game by speaking with others about their observations of the game to ascertain if we were seeing the same thing as I described it. I then make alterations as needed to make the most pure description of the game as I can.in the hope of reaching the closest approximation of a shared reality.

Three thinkers most influenced my understanding of phenomenology in the thesis: Paulo Freire (1921-1997), Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), and Martin Buber (1878-1965). In general, they represent the soul, body and spirit of phenomenological thought to me.

Paulo Freire's Conception of Phenomenology

I concur with Freire that phenomenology can be a vehicle for social change by having people work together to see their/our world differently. Freire states: "The true purpose of education is to enable people to see themselves and their life afresh and to transform both, so that they can lead more fulfilling lives" (qtd. in Kneller 1984, p. 52). Freire advocated a phenomenological approach that focused on problem-posing education where people develop the ability to perceive the world from different perspectives:

…people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in

35

the world with which and in which they find themselves: they come to

see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in

transformation…the teacher-student and the students-teachers reflect

simultaneously on themselves and the world without dichotomizing this

reflection from action, and thus establish an authentic form of thought

and action. (1980, p.83)

Freire (2001) stated that, "the problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his

reflections in the reflection of the students; the students-no longer docile listeners-are

now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (p.80-81). Additionally,

"problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality… striving for the

emergence of consciousness and *critical intervention* in reality" (p.81). The concept of

educational quality supported by the *status quo* of PHS did not use a problem-posing

approach to education, and being docile learners were the socially accepted roles

students were expected to assume.

Freire (1985) stated in *The Politics of Education*:

We recognize the indisputable unity between subjectivity and objectivity in the

act of knowing. Reality is never just simply the objective datum, the concrete

fact, but is also men's perception of it. Once again, this is not a subjectivism or

idealistic affirmation, as it might seem. On the contrary, subjectivism and

idealism come into play when the subjective-objective unity is broken. (p.51)

Freire's language of co-investigation, liberation, and praxis (action and

reflection upon the world in order to change it) provided me a pragmatic language to

guide the vision of the action research. I embraced with unbridled enthusiasm his

method of approaching the education process and for attaining knowledge for the

betterment of self, others, one's community, and the world at large so that humankind

can improve in fostering a caring, need-fulfilling, and vibrant world. Freire's method of approaching education, interestingly, is congruent with the tenets of validation for living theory research.

> Authentic help means that all who are involved help each other mutually growing together in the common effort to understand the reality which they seek to transform. Only through such praxis-in which those who help and those who are being helped help each other simultaneously-can the act of helping become free from the distortion in which the helper dominates the helped. (McLaren and Leonard 1993, p.150)

Freire's call for an education of liberation influenced my understanding of the power of using phenomenology as a path to understanding and modelling a new framework for understanding and modelling the meaning of quality in American public education.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's Conception of Phenomenology

Merleau-Ponty maintains, "I am not basically a thinker who creates mental pictures of the world, but an actor directly linked to the world through my body" (Kneller 1984, p.41). Perception involves action. Merleau-Ponty states it was because we explore the world bodily that we come to know the world because, without our bodies, we would not know ourselves because we would not exist (Baldwin, 2007). Much of what people perceive is pre-reflective. "I often move bodily among things and persons without thinking what I am doing. Only from time to time do I focus on myself and ask, "What's going on here?" Thus, much perception is not a conscious act but the background against which acts stand out" (Kneller, 1984, 43). Merleau-Ponty's statement is congruent with the underpinnings of living theory's essential question: "What am I doing in my practice and how can I improve?"

Merleau-Ponty (1965) believed there was an inseparable interconnection between people's thinking and speaking. He postulated there was no division between peoples' thoughts and their perception of things and people come to know themselves from their relation to things. During World War I, a man named Schneider suffered brain injuries from combat. Because of the injury, his perception of the world had become severely limited. His field of attention could not be drawn to past or future; only the ever-present registered in his conscience. Meaning in his life constituted only of the fleeting moments of the present. There existed for him no cohesion of meaning in life as with normal functioning human beings who draw from the past, present, and future. Schneider had no on-going personal identity.

> So in Schneider's case disability is not merely neurophysiological; nor is it just a disorder of a consciousness detached from behaviour; instead it bears witness to the normal personal union of mind and body through which a form of intentionality is expressed in unreflective but organized bodily movement. Once the further step is taken of recognizing that this is the basic form of intentionality, it follows that the phenomenological perspective itself needs to be relocated from the personal sphere of explicit thought to the sub-personal domain of bodily movement. (Baldwin, 1998, p.322; qtd. in Primozic, 2000, p.22)

The malfunction of the body-subject in this case was the apparent reason for no on-going self-identity. The body-subject is a fully integrated reality that is able to orient human beings in the world only through its integrated existence and, furthermore, effectively enables people to arrange the world and its chaotic content and context into a recognisable pattern of experience. Merleau-Ponty used the example of the Schneider case to illustrate body-subject existence as the source of human meaning. Therefore, "one is always the body-subject and is never an ethereal, free floating, transcendental ego" (Primozic, 2000,

p.22).

> My body is unique in nature; unlike anything nonhuman, it is both subjective and
>
> objective. My body is a subject because I perceive with it and act through it, and
>
> am nothing without it. My body is an object because I can stand back and look at
>
> it. I can feel and touch it and know it is mine…Nothing else in the world is both
>
> subject and object at the same time. (Kneller, p.42)

I embraced Merleau-Ponty's perspective of the importance of the body as an inextricable source of meaning. I, therefore, was sensitive to my own and other people's sense of body within my interactions during the action research project. School principals, in my professional experience, do not normally talk about body awareness and the messages other bodies around us are sending. In my professional experience school principals, most often, refer to body in public education only when someone used it in a grotesque or impolite way; for instance: a student pointing their middle finger at someone, a student wearing clothing that is inappropriately revealing, or students using their bodies to hurt each other through physical altercation. These characteristics of body are usually taken quite seriously. In juxtaposition, educational professionals do not often speak about body language and body experience as a source of positive information, knowledge, and a valid form of feedback. I, therefore, valued my bodily experience and others in collecting, analysing, and reaching conclusions about data to generate new knowledge.

In Merleau-Ponty's (1968) last, partially finished, work before his death, *The Visible and Invisible*, he postulated there is no absolute truth. The most we as humans can hope for, from an epistemological standpoint, was an ambiguous, pre-reflective perception of truth. He believed:

> …as soon as one reaches the true, that is, the invisible it seems that each

man inhabits his own islet, without there being transition from one to the other, and we should rather be astonished that sometimes men come to agreement about anything whatever. (Primozic, 2000, p.47)

Bodily contact with the world is, therefore, pre-reflective. We experience the world initially without passing any cognitive judgements. In our initial experience, we are aware only that there is "something" existing. This "virgin" experience begins the process of knowledge and understanding. Merleau-Ponty believed thinking truth or reality is somehow lurking beyond human experience was fallacious. He believed the world is what we see (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). He professed that appearance and reality are enveloped in the existence of reality. Understanding and recognizing "truth" is, therefore, not a singular event. Rather, "truth" is a process of unfolding.

Merleau-Ponty urged people to embrace primordial contact, to see with virgin eyes. The world we are immersed in, according to him, pre-exists human beings thoughts about it. Hence, my use of phenomenology in the spirit of Merleau-Ponty was an attempt to see the educational community I was the leader as it appeared to be without colouring it with my interpretation during each case study of the thesis.

Martin Buber and Phenomenology

As discussed in chapter one, I believe educational and personal growth is optimised through caring, kind and competent communion with people. According to Martin Buber (1996), there exists two conflicting paradigms of interpersonal communication, "I-Thou" and "I-It." In the "I-Thou" paradigm people interact with each other in a life-affirming manner: showing respect for the sanctity and unique life force each person embodies. People come together in their "totality," in their "wholeness', seeking communion with people. This is in contrast to an "I-It" approach which a person objectifies another using coercion and manipulation for potential

personal gain.

Buber believed, as did Bahtkin (McQuillan, 2000), that dialogue transcends the language used. "Dialogue is a meeting beyond discourse, beyond time and space. We very well may experience the world of It only through language, but we meet Thou directly" (Sidorkin, 1999, p.26). I believe meeting the "Thou" directly is the essence of humanistic and critical education. It encouraged me to see the best in other people and their potential for success and positive change. I viewed dialogue as the key to education liberation from the modern American public education embrace of positivism and practices that objectify and impoverish the humanity and potential for success of learners and teachers. I dedicated my career as an educator to elevate humanity in my educational practice and leadership. I aimed to help the students and teachers I worked with daily to recognize their talents, potential, specialness, competency, creativity, beauty and hope for a meaningful future.

In my two decades of experience in American public education I discovered using the terminology "I-Thou" often was interpreted to have religious overtones and was troublesome to a vocal few. I, therefore, preferred to use an alternative construct of "I-You/We" as more suitable terminology while embodying the same message. I used the terminology "I-You/We" henceforth in the study.

My primary concern was successfully assuming responsibility for the positive and meaningful learning of students and teachers, meeting their quality needs, and improving their performance academically and socially. Being responsible, in my understanding of the concept, is to respond to a situation in accord with your values and beliefs and in respect for oneself and others. It was my responsibility as an American public high school principal to understand students' and teachers' quality values and beliefs in order to establish rapport conducive to improving their learning, knowledge,

competency and sense of belonging in the school community and the world at large.

A Buberian-like approach to phenomenology reminded me in the research process I was responsible for the students and teachers I served as leader. I was responsible because I took ownership of my behaviour and decisions and strived to treat others with respect, care, and a sense of fairness and equality. It provided me a way to hush the judgemental voice in my head, and to be in the moment with people. Listening and being aware of body language and non-verbal and verbal cues so I gained the most accurate picture I could of what a person was trying to convey and the quality needs they desired to fulfil. I strove to improve my consistency in interacting with people in a life-affirming manner.

A Phenomenological-Hermeneutic Approach to Written and Visual Texts

I did not approach written and visual texts as an "it" in the thesis. Texts were written and created by people and, more likely than not, the creators of a text believed it was important enough to spend their precious time to promote their message. I, therefore, approach texts as a "you/we" in the thesis. Grudin (1996) summarized my approach to reading written texts when he wrote, "The act of reading generates a hermeneutic loop between text and reader… in which communicative barriers fall away and a living relationship is born….In Buber's language, the text becomes a "thou"" (p.136).

Roland Barthes's (1975) understanding of approaching texts was also influential in my research approach. He believed reading was not simply a mental exercise. He declared, "The pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas-for my body does not have the same ideas I do" (p.17). By approaching all texts under consideration in a fully aware and receptive manner, I experienced different, yet often interrelated, understandings of my leadership and its effect on other peoples' learning

and the social and academic milieu of the school community. Barthes (1975) echoed Gadamer's sentiment in his belief meaning transcended the mind of the author and emerged in the act of reading. I viewed my lived experience in the action research project as an interpretive story (Ellis and Flaherty, 1992; Geertz, 1973). I looked to understand the personal meaning of the research story; its implications for my educational leadership, my influence and the impact on other people's learning, and the social and academic formation of the school.

Schratz and Walker (1995) wrote " the scenery provided by the literature is not static; just as a landscape changes constantly as patches of cloud and sunlight move across it, sudden storms, overnight snow, the movement of the sun, the changing seasons, all change the way we see it, sometimes revealing some features and at other times obscuring them" (p.103). The literature, texts, and artefacts I reviewed consistently transformed into an ever-changing landscape of information and meaning for me as I developed a living theory for the meaning of quality in American public education to guide my school leadership.

More difficult for me was having to suspend my beliefs and opinions when encountering information that caused me dissonance. For instance, when reading or listening to someone share with me they thought my beliefs and opinions were incorrect, it took extra effort to be attentive to listening and understanding and not to become defensive. I worked on meditation techniques so I could allow the information of an experience come to me with the fewest amount of interpretive filters interfering. I learned to quiet my mind to authentically listen. Anderson (2004) stated, "…to know a phenomenon of experience or of nature, we must love it and become its friend. It is as though what is observed gently yields itself to our knowing. There is no object, no subject, and no intrusion… our loving approach brings the nature of the phenomenon

studied alive to our senses" (p.31). The loving approach to understanding Anderson advocated was the way I approached the phenomenon of "educational quality" in the thesis.

Gadamer believed, and I concurred, how I viewed the relationship of texts to students:

> Instead of submitting to the text, students converse with it. They recognize that the text has something to give-not a determinate meaning but a possibility of interpretation that must be filled in and relevant to the present. They endeavour to locate the question that the text addresses. The answer is the subject of the text, and it is this rather than the author's personal meaning that concerns the student. By moving back and forth between their altering horizons and that of the text, students seek to locate the message of the text and make it personally meaningful. (Kneller 1984, p.80)

In this study I first engaged a text phenomenologically. I initiate my engagement with a text with the intent of not making judgements or arguments. I listen to text as one does in dialogue with another person. In subsequent re-reading(s) of a text I use a Gadamerian-influenced hermeneutical approach (Gadamer, 1999, 1983). Re-reading(s) of a text initiate my turn to talk in the dialogue and the process of reading become a conversation of sorts where I glean insight, reach new conclusions, and formulate new questions. Gadamer states that a person should "listen to the text, turning the written word into imagined speech" (Kneller, 1984, p.80). When I read a text I have a conversation with the author, or his/her characters, as if I were listening and speaking in the first person with him or her. This systematic process of addressing a person or written text phenomenologically first and hermeneutically second I believe optimised my capacity in this study as an educational researcher to understand information with

profound depth and breadth.

Hermeneutic Methodology: A Humanistic and Critical Dimension of the Research

The hermeneutical tradition I was most influenced by in this study was the framework of Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004, 1999, 1983). Gadamer perceives:

> …the philosophical quest as a loop in which the observer opens up an understanding of the observed through constant re-readings and reconstructions of self and subject; more generally, he views experience as a kind of ballgame between observer and observed, in which each play or stroke opens up a new vision of what has gone before (Grudin 1996, p. 71).

In agreement with Gadamer, I believed the reality of PHS was linguistically mediated and heavily influenced by a popularly perceived historical culture.

> Gadamer believed:

> …the original meaning of a text is both unnecessary and impossible to recover, and that understanding involves creation of new meaning. This implies, among other things, that the original meaning may have existed in the first place. Gadamer still allows for the singularity of meaning at the moment when the text is created" (Sidorkin 1999, p.25).

Gadamer believed people should approach a text like a conversation with the words of the texts becoming imagined speech of the author. From an education perspective, Gadamer believed:

> …instead of submitting to the text, students converse with it. They recognize that the text has something to give-not a determinate meaning but a possibility of interpretation that must be filled in and relevant to the present. They endeavor to locate the question that the text addresses. The answer is the subject of the text, and it is this rather than the author's personal meaning that concerns the student.

By moving back and forth between their altering horizons and that of the text, students seek to locate the message of the text and make it personally meaningful" (Kneller 1984, p.80).

My understanding of text includes transcripts from interviews and conversations and entries in my research journals.

Gadamer (2004) believed that understanding occurs through a "fusion of horizons":

In fact the horizon of the present is continually in the process of being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing occurs in encountering the past and in understanding the tradition from which we come. Hence the horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past. There is no more isolated horizon of the present in itself than there are historical horizons which have to be acquired. Rather, understanding is always the fusion of these horizons supposedly existing by themselves. p. 305)

Often chaos was reigning around me as the principal of the school and it was difficult to see the horizon as my vision was blocked by the everyday challenges of the job (Gadamer, 2004). During a school day I was routinely faced with a multitude of conflicts and problematic situations: quarrels between students and teachers and parents and teachers, alcohol or drug related incidents, fights, theft, students smoking and drug use, harassment, students leaving school grounds and/or skipping class, disruptive behaviours in the school classrooms or hallways, poor sportsmanship issues in athletics, and dealing with non-student drug dealers conducting business on school grounds. Occasionally, there were bomb threats and or threats against other people's lives, police investigations of crimes that involved students, and issues of sexual assault and child abuse occurring outside the school. On the horizon was my goal of being a life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing quality school principal who

consistently promoted a hopeful and progressive social and academic milieu.

The role and responsibilities of the principalship often placed "blinders' on me making the horizon difficult to "see." The tradition of the principalship at PHS had been to be an apt manager of the *status quo* operation of the school. The "horizon" was considered rhetoric I was expected to be able to articulate to the board of education, parents, and to the media when the occasion arose. Upholding and promoting the *status quo* was the unspoken expectation the local community had of the school principal.

Gadamer (2004) cautioned, "We are always affected, in hope and fear, by what is nearest to us, and hence we approach the testimony of the past under its influence. Thus it is constantly necessary to guard against over hastily assimilating the past to our own expectations of meaning. Only then can we listen to tradition in a way that permits it to make its own meaning heard" (p.305). Gadamer believed tradition is ever present and we cannot completely escape from it no matter how hard we endeavour. The tenets of tradition, he posited, form our preconceptions and serve as the foundation of all understanding (Dostal and Roberts, 2002). I used a critical approach to hermeneutics to deconstruct how I was affected by the traditions of PHS in understanding and modelling the meaning of educational quality in my leadership.

Peoples' Search for Meaning: Viktor Frankl and His Influence on My Hermeneutical Lens of Interpretation and Deconstruction

Frankl (2000) stated that "human existence—at least as long as it has not been neurotically distorted—is always directed to something, or someone, other than itself, be it a meaning to fulfil or another human being to encounter lovingly. I have termed this constitutive characteristic of human existence "self-transcendence." What is called "self-actualization" is ultimately an effect, the unintentional by-product, of self-transcendence" (p.84). Frankl posited that "man is originally characterized by "his

search for meaning" rather than his "search for himself." The more he forgets himself-giving himself to a cause or another person-the more *human* he is. And the more he is immersed and absorbed in something or someone other than himself the more he really becomes *himself*" (Frankl, p.84-5). Csikszentmihalyi (1990) echoed this sentiment when he wrote, "In the lives of many people it is possible to find a unifying purpose that justifies the things they do day in, day out-a goal that like a magnetic field attract their psychic energy, a goal upon which all lesser goals depend…Without such purpose, even the best ordered consciousness lacks meaning" (p.218a).

Since the only lasting assessment of student learning is a transcript with quantitative data about student grades, class rank and state mandated standardised academic test score achievement as evidence of quality learning, it is reasonable to conclude grades, rank, and test score success were the unifying purpose for education at PHS. This unifying purpose of education lacked meaning for students who struggled to attain good grades and test scores and were ranked low in their class. The aim of my action research was to improve the unifying purpose of education at PHS through the development of a transformational understanding of quality

Frankl (1984) wrote, "meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a "secondary rationalization" of instinctual drives. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only the does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own *will* to meaning" (p.104-105). Frankl's research on meaning led him to develop a revolutionary psychological therapy called "Logotherapy." It is a form of therapy "in comparison with psychoanalysis, is a method less retrospective and less introspective. Logotherapy focuses rather on the future, that is to say, on the meaning to be fulfilled by the patient in the future" (Frankl, 2000, p.104).

Explaining why he coins this therapeutic approach Logotherapy, he stated:

Let me explain why I have employed the term "Logotherapy" as the name for

my theory. Logos is a Greek word which denotes "meaning." Logotherapy, or,

as it has been called by some authors, "The Third Viennese School of

Psychotherapy," focuses on the meaning of humane existence as well as on

man's search for such a meaning. According to Logotherapy, this striving to

find meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force in man. That is why

I speak of a will to meaning in contrast to the pleasure principle (or, as we could

also term it, the will to pleasure) on which Freudian psychoanalysis is centered,

as well as in contrast to the will to power on which Adlerian psychology, using

the term "striving for superiority, "is focused." (Frankl, 2000, p.104-105)

I used Frankl's identification of a "will to meaning," a "will to pleasure," and "will

to power" from his Logotherapy approach as the three different hermeneutical lenses by

which to examine and categorize the data I collected. The research tool I gleaned from

Frankl's work was to gather and interpret data about how students and teachers envisioned

themselves attaining quality in the future and then to look at the current research situation

and identify what cognitive barriers needed to be overcome and what new cognitive

systems created to eliminate perceived and "real" barriers to achieving and experiencing

quality.

Evidence of Rhythm, Resonance and Collective Intelligence as

Valid Data Sources and Methods for Generating New Knowledge

I accepted George Leonard's (1991) hypothesis there is a perfect universal rhythm that

affects the context of human communication. In scientific studies, it has been proven that

when two or more oscillators in the same field are pulsating at approximately the same

time, they eventually communicate together to pulsate at exactly the same time. The

reason, Leonard wrote, is simply that "nature seeks the most efficient energy state, and it takes less energy to pulse in cooperation than in opposition" (p.14). A simple illustration of what Leonard is speaking about is the fact two grandfather clocks in a room will most often synchronize the rhythm of their pendulum swings regardless of how different the two clocks begin their pendulum swings at first.

Leonard (1978) believed that living things are oscillators. Therefore, living things pulse and change rhythmically. Evidence of this is seen at even the smallest level of life. Leonard states, " The simplest single-celled organism oscillates to a number of different frequencies, at the atomic, molecular, subcellular, and cellular levels; microscopic movies of these organisms are striking for the ceaseless, rhythmic pulsation that is revealed" (Leonard, 1978, p.15).

William S. Condon's work on rhythm in human communication supported the credibility of Leonard's belief of the importance of rhythm. Leonard (1991) wrote, "Dr. Condon's discoveries about the subtle, largely unseen conversational dance, in fact, tend to upset our usual notions about the interaction between speaker and listener, and suggest a new way of looking at all relationships" (p.15). His findings illustrate that we often seek unconsciously to be in rhythm with other people when we interact. My training as a certified practitioner of NLP further added credibility to this belief. As a school of thought, NLP stresses the importance of discovering rapport with other people through synchronising breathing, tonality, body language, and value systems.

Condon's methodology for his research was painstakingly time-consuming and greatly enhanced the validity and reliability of his findings. He called his method *microanalysis*. Leonard summarizes how the method worked:

He takes moving pictures of, say, a conversation between two people, then,

displays the film on a time-motion analyser. He numbers the individual frames

and runs them manually again and again, a thousand times if need be, until every

micromovement is noted…As it turns out, the micromovements of the speaker's

body are precisely synchronized with the microunits of his speech. (Leonard,

1991, p.15-16)

In an experiment by Condon:

…two persons were hooked up to an electroencephalograph while engaged in

conversation, with one camera filming the principals while another focused on

the machine. During the entire period of conversation, the two EEG recording

pens moved in such perfect union as to appear "driven" by a single force; only

when the talk was interrupted by a third person did the readings diverge. On the

basis of many such experiments over a period of some fifteen years, Condon has

concluded that interaction within a culture is governed by "body synthesizers"

set in motion almost immediately after birth and thereafter conditioned by

culture. On this view, interpersonal communication is not a matter of "isolated

entities sending discrete messages" back and forth but a process of mutual

participation in a common structure of rhythmic patterns shared by all members

of the culture. (Montagu and Matson, 1979, p.153).

Montagu and Matson (1979) also stated:

There are multiple layers and levels of rhythm, within and around us,

overlapping and contrapuntal. It appears, for one thing, that each of us acquires

a personal beat, our own "composition" as it were, which is expressed in what

we call personality. As Thoreau said, "If a man does not keep pace with his

companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to

the music which he hears, however measured or far away." Underlying that

individual note, nonetheless, is the insistent tempo and cadence imposed by

culture, the distinctive beat of the tribal drum. And still deeper within us there resounds the rhythm of life itself. (p. 155)

There is an overwhelming amount of evidence from elite athletes, and people in general, across the globe of the existence of a universal rhythm and collective consciousness (Bache, 2008; Csikszentmihalyi, 1998; Grof, 1993; Lazlo, 1995; Leonard, 1995, 1991, 1987, 1978; McTaggart, 2011; Sheldrake, 2009, 1995a, 1995b, 1981; Wilber, 2001a, 2001b, 2000, 1998; Walsh and Vaughan, 1993a, 1993b; Watts 1977, 1973, 1971). Across the globe, well-known figures such as Arthur Ashe, the now-infamous O. J. Simpson, and playwright Neil Simon have described meta-normal experiences of rhythm when things are "going well":

> Jerry Cohen writes of the times when a "great talent already operating at its presumed optimum, suddenly bursts beyond it and remains frozen in our memories." Tennis champion Arthur Ashe calls it "being in the zone." The great running back O. J. Simpson describes the experience of his most spectacular run as somehow watching himself in a daydream. Recalling a sixty-four-yard open field run that gave USC a pivotal 21-20 victory over UCLA in 1967, Simpson says, "Ah, man, I just took off and ran. When it was over, I felt good. But somehow I knew it was going to happen, even though it was a spontaneous thing" (Montagu and Matson, 1979, p.117).

The concept of entrainment supports the reality of collective rhythm:

> Entrainment is the synchronization of two or more rhythmic cycles. The phenomenon was first discovered by Christian Huygens, a Dutch scientist, in 1665. While designing a pendulum clock, Huygens found that when he placed two such clocks near each other and started them at different times, they would eventually end up ticking in unison. Since then, entrainment has been

established as a universal physical force in nature that will act on any two or more vibrating bodies as long as their rhythmic cycles are similar….Entrainment works just as effectively with biological rhythms as with physical ones. Heartbeat and breathing rates, motor movements, and brain waves have all been shown to be entrained by sound" (Leonard, 1978, p.69).

Braud and Anderson's (1998) description of sympathetic resonance complements my understanding of the importance of using resonance as a method of collecting and assessing data to generate knowledge.

To borrow analogies from acoustical physics, the response of a suitably prepared or predisposed system (e.g. a resonating note of piano A) to the call of another system (piano B) depends on the similarity of structure and operating rules of the two systems and the degree of fullness or fidelity of the call (the deliberate sounding of a note on piano B). We could speak of a complexity of emitted sound waves, rich in overtones and undertones (a symphony of sound), evoking a similar complexity of response. We could speak of thresholds of elicitation and of narrowness or sidedness of windows of resonance. The experiential description would have to be sufficiently accurate and complete ("descriptively thick") for it to evoke a resonant response in a reader.

One of the mysteries of resonance has to do with the extremely narrow and precise tuning that is possible: One system will accept energy from another system only in a narrow frequency band. This, of course, accounts for the exquisite efficiency with which a radio or television tuner is able to faithfully reproduce complex information within one narrow area of the electromagnetic spectrum (one particular station or channel) while rejecting all other information that lies outside that narrow range. The receiver has resonant circuits that are

quite selective-they respond to certain features as signals while rejecting others as noise. (p.224-225)

Montagu and Matson (1979) called the nonverbal resonance and rhythm of conversation the "silent duet of body language" (p. 151), and this "duet" occurs not only in two-person experiences, but also in meetings and encounters between numerous people. My fascination with importance of resonance and rhythm in human communication led to my discovery of the school of thought referred to as "neuro-linguistic programming" (NLP). NLP embraced embodied rhythm, resonance, and collective intelligence as valid data sources within a cohesive framework for seeking rapport and understanding of oneself and other people and I translated it into a research method for the thesis.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming as a Research Tool

As discussed in chapter one (p. 15-16), neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is most succinctly defined as the art and science of human excellence. "Its purpose is to remove blockages and enable results-oriented change through better interaction with other people" (Kay and Kite, 2009, p.1). It is concerned with gaining knowledge of oneself and of how to be more effective in meeting one's needs and the needs of others. NLP promote the idea we can do this best through discovering and emulating our own, and other people's, patterns of excellence in any field of experience. We improve ourselves by observing and learning the ways effective people think and communicate (Bandler, 2008; Bandler and Grinder, 1975; Blyth and Heron, 2011; Dilts, 1998, 1996; Gilligan and Dilts, 2009).

NLP references three key areas of human performance. The term "neuro" refers to the fact that all of our behaviour emanates from neurological processes. The term "linguistic" refers to the fact we use language to order our thoughts and behaviour. It is

what allows us to communicate effectively with other people. The term "programming" refers to the choices we have in organizing our thoughts and actions to produce the actions we desire.

NLP was born in the mid-1970s from the minds of John Grinder and Richard Bandler (1975). Their initial goal was to identify patterns used by outstanding therapists and be able to articulate these patterns to help other therapists improve their practice. Specifically, they based their research on the work of three notable and influential therapists: Virginia Satir (Andreas, 1999), renowned family therapist, Milton Erikson (Bandler, 1975), internationally known hypnotherapist, and Fritz Perls (Perls, 1973), the founder of Gestalt therapy.

In 2008, I attended 120 hours of rigorous resident-based classroom instruction in Winter Park, Colorado, and passed a comprehensive performance based exam to earn certification as a practitioner of NLP through the organisation NLP Comprehensive. The certification course increased my awareness, capacity, and skill in taking into account all the senses, both mine and other people's, to improve my rapport and accurate understanding of meaning within communication. The intensive training I received in NLP was an invaluable asset to my skill set as an action researcher and school leader, most notably in competently reading the body language and verbal and nonverbal cues people portray in communications. I paid close attention in the action research and thus to the language, both verbal and non-verbal, people used in their interviews in addition to monitoring myself.

When I first adopted an NLP-based approach in my interactions with people in the action research process, I found it difficult and frustrating. Learning to listen to others reflectively while paying close attention to body language and verbal and non-verbal cues to glean deeper understanding, while trying to quiet my own mind, was a

daunting task. All too often, I found myself paying attention to body language, only to find I had not listened to the person's words, and vice versa. In pilot studies leading to this thesis, I practiced and refined my skills though individual and group interviews with different age groups to become proficient in my competency to interact with people using all five senses (including touching, which occurred in the handshake used to greet people and to represent gratitude after an interview).

I used NLP as an educational tool (Bandler, 2008) and research method to build rapport and improve the positive impact I had on students and teachers in the research process (Bandler, 2008; Bandler and Grinder, 1975; Dilts, 1998). The use of NLP tools improved my ability to build rapport and develop a more personal orientation toward other people in the research environment. There is much debate over the specific definition and uses for NLP. I did not go down that rabbit hole in the thesis. I borrowed the tools I deemed relevant and desirable for inclusion as a research approach and method in the study from my training in NLP and from the NLP literature.

The standard of judgement I used for assessing the validity of NLP as a research method included:

1. Empirical evidence I picked up the verbal and non-verbal cues of people in semi-structured interviews and research situation conversations and logically identified the impact it had on the content and context of meaning in the collection and interpretation of the data and generation of knowledge.

2. The "map is not the territory" in the research process

3. The meaning of my communication with students and staff in the action research project, regardless of my "intent," were the response I received. The validity of my claim to have improved the learning of students and teachers comes from the responses of the people I claimed to have helped.

Spiral Dynamics as a Research Tool

A difficulty I experienced in pilot studies preparing for this thesis was discovering a way of systemically organising how I and the subjects of my interview shared a common value and belief system about educational quality while allowing for a wide diversity of thought and beliefs about quality. I perceived the data collection was incomplete if I did not address the value and belief systems of the people involved in the study. The ways in which a person understands, conceptualises, and models the meaning of quality is intimately tied to a person's values and beliefs. I required understanding their value and belief system to make sense of their working framework for identifying and experiencing quality. I believed I found a helpful research tool in borrowing from spiral dynamics (Beck and Cowan, 1996), a concept I first discussed in chapter one of the thesis.

Spiral dynamics is a conceptual system that explores and identifies the deep and underlying values and beliefs that support what people believe and do. Spiral dynamics was born from the work of Clare W. Graves (2005), a professor of psychology at Union College in New York. Graves's essential research question was, "What are the conceptions of psychological health extant in the minds of biologically mature human beings?" Building off Graves' work, Beck and Cowan (1996) organised and popularised Graves work into what is now referred to as spiral dynamics.

Graves was a student of eminent psychologist Abraham Maslow (1968), who developed a hierarchy of needs that culminated in the highest level of development, which he referred to as self-actualisation. He postulated few people in the world achieve this state. Graves postulates that Maslow's understanding of human development was unnecessarily limited and closed. He states that there is no final stage of development, no ultimate stage of growth that can be defined. He postulates that human development is

ultimately an open-ended enterprise. Furthermore, he proposes that people's perceived needs are based on predominate operational value systems, which change in a predictable manner, not on their needs, as Maslow proposed. I agree with Graves on both points based on my professional experiences as an educator and school leader. I do not believe self-actualisation is the highest stage of human development, and I believe it is value systems, not needs, that change in a predictable manner

Graves (2005) stated:

When the human is centralized in one state of existence, he or she has a psychology which is particular to that state. His or her feelings, motivations, ethics and values, biochemistry, degree of neurological activation, learning system, belief system, conception of mental health, ideas as to what mental illness is and how it should be treated, conceptions of and preferences for management, education, economics, and political theory and practice are all appropriate to that state. (p.1)

Beck and Cowan (1996) effectively stemmed two tides of thought: Graves' (2005) value system theory model and Richard Dawkins's (2006) meme theory. They have created what is now known as spiral dynamics which is a bio-psycho-social-spiritual framework for understanding human value systems and the driving forces behind human behaviour, decision making, and the impetus, or lack thereof, for social and individual change. . Each level of the spiral dynamics system reflects what is referred to as vmemes (value memes). Dawkins (2006) and Blackmore (1999) defined memes as concepts that replicate themselves in the minds of people in a similar way as genes replicate themselves to create coherent physical structures. Like genetic replication, memes can either replicate, diminish, or become unfit for use. Macgill (2000) stated, "Each society has a shared set of values forming a coherent structure and

world view in order to ensure social stability. The value systems attract memes which are in harmony with themselves; these attractors are called memes or vmemes" (p.6-7). I used the concept of memes and vmemes as helpful epistemological tools in the study and did not address ontological implications as they were beyond the scope of the thesis.

I learned from the concept of spiral dynamics to perceive people's conflicts about the meaning of quality in a situation as conflicts between belief and value systems rather than being based on behavioural stereotypes. A person can operate from several different value systems at any given time. However, there is one value system that serves as an attractor to a person in general, or where he or she feels most comfortable acting. In order to use spiral dynamics effectively in the research, I made an effort to understand the deep values of the people with whom I interacted in the research project through semi-structured interviews, reflective listening, and building rapport. The essential questions spiral dynamics inspired me to address in the thesis were, essentially:

- If it is time for a change in the meaning of quality in American public high school education, then change from what to what?

- Which variation of change maximises the capacity for human need fulfilment?

Most notably, as a school principal, I learned from Graves that (2005) "The manager's role is to rework the organization so that its goals are achieved utilizing people as they are and not as someone wishes them to be or perceives they should be" (p.8). I found beauty in this quote and tried to emulate this belief in my leadership and during the action research project.

The following is a summary of the eight value systems of spiral dynamics.

Graves promoted the idea that human beings evolve through different stages of bio-psycho-social-spiritual development. A person thus goes through the spiral, alternating between individually focused and group-focused stages. The colour coding of the levels was created by Beck and Cowan (1996) for ease of use. The first six levels are considered to be first-tier stages. Level seven, eight and nine are considered second-tier stages. The main difference between the two tiers is that the first tiers reflect thinking that is "win-lose," whereas second-tier thinking is "win-win." The following illustrates the spiral dynamics explanatory model:

	LIFE CONDITIONS			BRAIN/MIND COPING CAPACITIES
A	State of nature and biological urges and drives: physical senses dictate the state of being.	BEIGE	N	Instinctive: as natural instincts and reflexes direct; automatic existence.
B	Threatening and full of mysterious powers and spirit beings that must be placated and appeased.	PURPLE	O	Animistic: according to tradition and ritual ways of group: tribal; animistic.
C	Like a jungle where the tough and strong prevail, the weak serve; nature is an adversary to be conquered.	RED	P	Egocentric: asserting self for dominance, conquest and power. Exploitive; egocentric.
D	Controlled by a Higher Power that punishes evil and eventually rewards good works and righteous living.	BLUE	Q	Absolutistic: obediently as higher authority and rules direct; conforming; guilt.
E	Full of resources to develop and opportunities to make things better and bring prosperity.	ORANGE	R	Muitiplistic: pragmatically to achieve results and get ahead; test options; maneuver
F	The habitat wherein humanity can find love and purposes through affiliation and sharing.	GREEN	S	Relativistic; respond to human needs; affiliative; situational; consensual; fluid.
G	A chaotic organism where change is the norm and uncertainty an acceptable state of being.	YELLOW	T	Systemic: functional; integrative; interdependent; existential; flexible; questioning; accepting.
H	A delicately balanced system of interlocking forces in jeopardy at humanity's hands; chaordic.	TURQUOISE	U	Holistic: experiential: transpersonal; collective consciousness; collaborative; interconnected.
I	Too soon to say, but should tend to be I-oriented; controlling, consolidating if the pattern holds.	CORAL	V	Next neurological capacities. The theory is open-ended up to the limits of *Homo sapiens'* brain.
	The theory is open-ended, with the possibility of more systems ahead…			

Fig. 2. Spiral Dynamics Explanatory Model. *S*ource: http://integralrising.org

I used spiral dynamics as research tool to understand better the thinking (Sternberg, 1997), behaviour, belief, and value systems I and other people had and to improve my success in resolving conflicts about the meaning of educational quality in a life-affirming manner (Beck and Cowan, 1996).

The standard of judgement I used for assessing the validity of spiral dynamics as a research tool in the study was empirical evidence of:

- The use of spiral dynamics as a research tool that improved my capacity to influence and impact positively the learning of students and teachers.

- My use of spiral dynamics as a research tool that influenced and impacted my success in building rapport with people in the study.

Fiction Storytelling as a Research Method

As discussed in chapter one, I used fictional stories to portray the subtle social and academic milieu of the research situations of the thesis' case studies. Fiction storytelling is a valid approach to describing the research environments, complexities, and situations with depth and breadth (Clough, 2001; Lakoff, G., and Johnson, 1980; Gravells and Wallace, 2012 Willis, 2007.). The use of storytelling enabled me to discuss important subtleties and political undertones of the research that a "factual" approach did not invite (Graham, 1989; Polkinghorne, 1988). Graham (1989) noted that, "the untruth of fiction may be more powerful and more significant than truth" (p.101). Living theory action research invites methodological inventiveness (Dadds and Hart, 2001) as a way of finding more profound expression of the life-affirming and unbounded nature of the research inquiry. I embraced the importance of methodological inventiveness through the use of historical fiction storytelling in the thesis.

Storytelling as a research method allowed me to present the social and academic milieu of the research situation with depth and breadth that better informs the reader of

the political nature of the research project and the risks involved in pursuing the study. I could also share the educational influences supporting my value and belief system regarding the meaning of educational quality and school leadership in a more creative, interesting, and meaningful manner than in a completely factual account, such as writing in the form of a traditional literature review chapter. For instance, traditional literature demonstrates that the researcher described and scrutinised the literature to demonstrate that the researcher has attained an exceptional knowledge base and skill in deconstructing scholarly literature. Conversely, a living theory researcher demonstrates how the literature influenced and impacted his or her educational values and beliefs (McNiff and Whitehead, 2011) and how the influence of the literature manifested in professional praxis. The essential benefit of using fiction storytelling in the thesis was that it allowed me freedom to be more honestly self-critical of my understanding and modelling of educational quality in my leadership because it was depersonalised. A strength of the approach was the powerful way it allowed me to depict the strengths and weaknesses of my research methodologies, methods, choice of literature influences, thinking to support my educational belief and values system, impact I had on other people, and the social and academic milieu of the school with which I served as principal. The approach also allowed my sense of being in the research process to be more transparent by using an imaginative and thought-provoking context.

Confidentiality and the Use of Pseudonyms in the Thesis

The British Educational Research Association outlines in their 2011 publication, "Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research," that "the confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research" (BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, 2011, p.7). I stringently followed this recommendation and all names of people, schools, and locations, and references

that could violate the anonymity of persons who were involved in the study have been

protected through the use of pseudonyms. In order to ensure the anonymity of my

critical friends in the thesis, I also used pseudonyms. The newspaper articles, Internet

sources, and radio station data I used in the thesis were also renamed with pseudonyms

so as to protect the privacy of the people and places involved in the action research.

CHAPTER THREE

Education Influences on My Values and Beliefs Regarding

Educational Quality: The Background Story of the

Thesis̶A Historical Fictional Tale

The real cycle you're working on is a cycle called yourself. The machine

that appears to be "out there" and the person that appears to be in "in

here" are not two separate things. They grow toward Quality or fall

away from Quality together. Pirsig, 1974, p.325

Introduction

This chapter is a historical fiction short story based on narrative excerpts from digital and print media sources, semi-structured interviews with research participants, entries in my research journal, literary influences on my educational values and beliefs, a critique of methodologies, and a personal narrative of the values and beliefs that give purpose to my life and practice as an educator and education leader. These sources were fundamental to my use of living theory action research. I used fiction storytelling as part of the methodological inventiveness Dadds and Hart (2001) advocated by Whitehead and McNiff in conducting living theory action research at a PhD level. Fiction storytelling optimized transmitting the complexities, nuances, and "narrative wreckage" (Whitehead, 2010) of my living theory action research project (Clough, 2001; Watson, 2011; Wade, Vaughn and Long, 2009). The use of fiction storytelling also provided a relevant and informative platform to introduce the subsequent living theory case studies, critical incidents, and overall action research process of the thesis. The following story highlights how my educational values and beliefs were denied by the expectation that my job as school principal was to uphold a *status quo* of educational quality that was

oppressive, impoverished, and prejudicial toward a notable number of public school students, teacher, coaches and staff.

This fictionalized story introduces my action research journey to challenge the status quo in which I served as an educational leader. This historical fiction story is in most ways an accurate portrayal of the reality of the school at which I worked, situations I faced as the school principal, and challenges I faced with the local community and media. I looked at the idea of educational quality practice not from a *status quo* understanding of an accepted way of doing things, where my job was to uphold this practice. I looked at practice as being defined by the essential questions that drove the creation of my PhD study, "How can I improve?" and, subsequently, "How can I help other people improve?" The story highlights my research intention to explore how I have been influenced and influenced others through both the actualization of the values and beliefs that give meaning to my practice and the contradictions in my practice when I was denied, or denied myself, living in congruence with my values and beliefs. The story also highlights how I influenced the social and academic milieu for the school both positively and negatively through living my values and beliefs though my leadership practices.

The story is told from the perspective of the trickster in the story, Agent Wiley, and his supervisor, the Transcriber, a character who reflects a media and popular mainstream cultural tradition that protects the *status quo*. My character in the story, Principal Barry, accurately reflects the values and beliefs that give purpose to my practice as an educator and education leader.

The primary purpose of the character of Agent Wiley is to protect the *status quo* of how quality is understood and modelled in the school in which I worked and American public education in general. The character of the Transcriber serves as an

example of someone who believes they record reality objectively and knows the "real truth" of a matter. This character can be seen as representing the ways a media source is biased and intent on writing history will support their *status quo* bias. Other characters in the story are based on actual people in the school and local community and their words and actions. The articles, blogs, and community member statements appearing in the story are transcriptions from primary sources.

One interesting note is the town of Asbestos, Canada, which appears in the prologue of the story. This is not a fictionalised town. The town was named after the asbestos of which the town was a major exporter to foreign countries. The power of the *status quo* I though was powerfully illustrated by the town's existence and continued interest in mining and selling asbestos to second-and third-world countries despite its lethal nature (http://www.aolnews.com/2011/02/17/will-canada-export-death-by-rejuvenating-its-last-asbestos-mine).

The Story Begins:

> *We wise grown-ups here at the company go gliding in and out all day long, scaring each other at our desks and cubicles and water coolers and trying to evade the people who frighten us. We come to work, have lunch, and go home. We goose-step in and goose-step out, change our partners and wander all about, sashay around for a pat on the head, and promenade home till we all drop dead.* (Joseph Heller, Something Happened, 1974, p.30)

My father worked as a status quo agent (SQA) in Canada in the 1990s. His mission was to ensure that a small Canadian town continued proudly to produce and sell Asbestos to underdeveloped countries, maintain pride in its town name of Asbestos, and continue to ignore overwhelming medical evidence of the lethal nature of Asbestos. As a *status quo* artiste, he masterfully orchestrated that people would stay beholden to the *status quo*: The town makes and sells asbestos, and it always will. The key to maintaining the *status quo*, and my father was brilliant at this, was to make sure people felt as if the *status quo* were a largely unchangeable objective reality that was dangerous and futile to challenge.

The result of my father's work in reinforcing commitment to the *status quo* in the town of Asbestos was remarkable and the reason his work is often included in SQA agent training manuals. Visitors to Asbestos, Canada experience a town fiercely loyal and proud of their town's name and the mining and sale of the lethal material to impoverished countries. Regardless of the overwhelming scientific evidence that asbestos is a killer of humans, the *status quo* my father reinforced was so powerful the townspeople did not even believe physicians and scientist who showed evidence of the danger of asbestos and refused to accept what they said as true. Any information or idea that is unfavourable to the mining and selling of asbestos was instinctively rejected by the townspeople. It was simply beautiful work by my father, and it inspired me to follow his example in my work to protect the *status quo* of quality in American public high school education.

My name is Agent Wiley. I am an Agent for the *Status quo* Commission for Quality (SQCQ), the Teaching and Learning Division (TLD) for the New England States of the United States of America. The TLD was established to maintain and nurture the health of the *status quo* of educational quality in public secondary schools in America. The role of an agent is to legitimise education leadership, pedagogy, and school policies and practices that reinforce and promote the *status quo* and denote them as the meaning of educational quality. Alternatively, I work to invalidate anything that seriously challenges the *status quo*. Essentially, I ensure that New England public schools remain elitist museums of knowledge that teach students correct and truthful interpretations of history, modern culture, and society that prize competition over cooperation and the need for America to be a nation of war and violence toward nations opposed to us (or who have things we want). They maintain that materialism is the best philosophy to understand the meaning of life. Indeed, we created the saying, "The man with the most toys at the end wins." I ensure schools teach students that a capitalistic, materialistic, legalistic, and heavily armed society that prizes competition over cooperation is inherently good for people and makes the USA superior to the rest of the world. Equally important in my position is to ensure that American public high schools continue to control access of advanced information and knowledge to only those students who demonstrate dedication and loyalty to the *status quo* of quality. This correctly assimilates students to their soon-to-be-designated status in the American class system.

The following case I will be sharing with you defined my career. It was not as grand as my father's case in Asbestos, Canada, but it would have made him proud if he had known about it.

Introduction by Agent Wiley

We agents aim to shape and control the shared beliefs and moral attitudes American citizens have about public education. We do this for the survival of the American way of life so Americans believe they can continue to dominate the world (or at least be able to make believe we do). How we do this is quite brilliant. We are multi-talented individuals who can blend into most professional and social situations. We are trained to influence the collective consciousness in any situation through identifying people who have the potential to affect the greatest number of other people. Through manipulation of influential people, we agents are usually successful in our efforts.

One of my specialties is controlling the collective consciousness of what constitutes the meaning of quality in American public education, specifically, high school education. I do not know why that is. I am just good at it. I most enjoy working in the New England states because I find the people lean towards puritanical thinking and behaviour. My favourite kind of people! In a small rural town, a few connections with socially influential people are necessary for respect and credibility town-wide.

As agents, we have a device in our brains that records all of our self-talk and conversations. These recordings are transcribed at a central station (located in an underground office in Oregon, USA) by highly skilled Transcribers. A Transcriber takes the information from my personal narration, the transcriptions of my self-talk, and relevant information from any sources (including other people's self-talk), and decides how to record the story of my investigation for the archives.

Transcriber Note: I am a veteran Transcriber, and this is my 1,743 case. As a veteran Transcriber, I interject my perspective into the archive transcript or rearrange reports as I see fit. Unseasoned Transcribers do not have such privileges. I record for history the truth for future generations to learn correct facts.

The Story

I took a sip of my black coffee from the flimsy white Styrofoam cup, which caused my hand to feel like it was slowly burning the skin off my palm. I opened the seal on the brown 8x10 envelope that read: *Confidential: For Agent Wiley's Eyes Only*. I gingerly removed the file from the envelope and read the new case to which I was assigned.

Agent Wiley File: Case Number 2525:

School Leader a Threat to the *Status quo* of Educational Quality at Potsdam High School, Potsdam, CT, USA.

There have been confirmed reports of a high school principal in a New England state who is a threat to the *status quo* for understanding and modelling educational quality in an American public high school. The new principal of the school, William J. Barry II, encourages students, faculty, staff, and community members to challenge the *status quo* of educational quality as being about standardised test scores, competitive ranking of students against each other, and an elitist system of separating students for instruction according to test scores, grades, and rank. He openly professes that the purpose of education is to promote social justice, contemplation, caring, happiness and, life-affirming and meaningful knowledge and skill acquisition. (These are only naming a few of the crazy ideas he has!) He uses such terms as "constructivism", "humanism," and "transformational quality" to defend his misguided beliefs. We identified Principal Barry as a problem when a secretary (one of our operatives) in his office sent the action research plan he developed to us. The action research plan he is following clearly demonstrates that Principal Barry is a threat to the *status quo* meaning of "quality" in high school public education. The following is a PDF of his action plan (influenced by that rabble-rouser in England Jack Whitehead (1996) and his idea of living theory action research). He must be stopped before he successfully completes his misguided plan. The *status quo* of educational quality at Potsdam High School depends on your success, Agent Wiley. Please find attached the action plan that Principal Barry is planning to put into effect.

I removed the paperclip holding the attachment to the letter and read the action plan of Principal Barry.

PDF: Copy of Principal Barry's Action Plan (faxed to our Texas office)

Living Theory Action to Improve my Leadership

1. I am concerned how my educational values and beliefs are denied by the expectation of my job as school principal to uphold an oppressive, unjust, and elitist *status quo* of educational quality. I am concerned the current understanding and modelling of educational quality as success on state-mandated, standardised academic tests, competitive grading, ranking of students against each other in the classroom, and student grouping for learning according to test scores, grades, and rank impoverishes the lives and learning of countless numbers of students in the school. Furthermore, I am concerned the social milieu of quality in the school understands and models a behaviouristic understanding of how to motivate students toward quality to use the punishment, threatening, marginalising, and exclusion of students.

2. I designed a solution. The plan is for me directly and consistently to address and challenge understandings and modelling of educational quality that promote or passively accept the impoverishment of other people. I aim to work collaboratively with people to promote a life-affirming, need-fulfilling understanding and modelling of quality. My commitment to the plan and my willingness to admit contradictions in my practice of quality as an educational leader will serve as inspiration to others to take risks to challenge the *status quo* of quality at the school.

The solution plan I used focused on school reform in primarily three areas of the school community at Potsdam High School:

1. Creating a transformational understanding and model of quality created though participatory action research. The new model will become a guide for my thinking, actions, and decisions about education quality in the school. The new model is a synthesis of participants' values and beliefs about quality, the literature about the meaning of quality in learning and performance, and the democratic principles on which American culture is based.

2. Changing the culture of passive acceptance of the belittling, threatening, marginalising, and excluding students and student athletes under the guise that it promotes quality to get the results desired by teachers and sport coaches at the school.

3. Changing the social and academic milieu of the school that embraces educational quality as congruent with a banking approach to pedagogy (Freire, 1970b) and enlisting homogenous grouping for student learning for first-year high school students. I will work collaboratively with teachers and staff to create and implement a life-affirming and need-fulfilling learning program for freshman students to help them feel safe and supported as they enter a more mature, challenging, and faster paced learning culture than in middle school. This will lead expectantly to a notable decrease in the alarmingly high number of serious student discipline incidents, including physical threats toward other students, teachers, and staff members, and the high rate of student failure attributed to freshman students. (Approximately fifty per cent of freshman year students failed at least one class in each of the past three years.)

4. In carrying out the action plan I will offer training and support to help coaches, teachers, and staff who need help in improving their understanding and modelling of educational quality in a life-affirming and need-fulfilling manner. I will, however, discipline, and/or suspend, or move to terminate coaches, teachers, and staff who consciously promote an atmosphere of fear, oppression, and ignorance and impoverish the lives of others in the school community. I will work collaboratively with staff, students, and town leaders and officials to promote the development of healthy young men and women.

My solution for success is to role-model an unwavering commitment to honouring and listening to others, regularly challenging the *status quo* of educational quality when it impoverishes the lives of people, and demonstrating behaviour and making leadership decisions consistent with my educational values and beliefs.

5. I will evaluate the outcome of my solution plan. I will look for contradictions between my intentions of improving the school community through improving the understanding and modelling of quality as a life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing concept and the impact and influence of my actions on the people I serve as school leader. In order to gather more detailed and personal feedback, I will meet with a group of five critical friends: a school principal, a school psychologist, a secretary, and a parent of a student, and a local community member. I will have critical friends observe me first-hand on a routine basis in my role as principal. I will also meet with a participatory action research validation committee of teachers, students, and parents twice a month for a year and a half to gather feedback and make changes as necessary to develop an improved sense of understanding and modelling of quality in the school.

6. I will modify my practice, plans and ideas in light of the evaluation of the action research. I will modify my leadership approach according to weaknesses and inconsistencies identified in the evaluation processes I established. The purpose of making modifications is to improve the consistency between my educational values and beliefs about educational quality, based on co-investigation, and my thinking, actions, and decisions as a school leader. I will produce evidence to demonstrate I improved my understanding and modelling of educational quality for the good of other people, and this evidence will be validated by the people I claimed to have influenced for the better (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009; Reason and Bradbury, 2008).

End of PDF.

Transcriber Note: The following is an excerpt from a letter from the agency outlining

Agent Wiley's mission and objectives that was sent to him via text message. He did not share this in his report.

Agent Wiley,

Principal Barry's plans of action, for obvious reasons, are unacceptable and a danger to the *status quo* of educational quality at PHS, and you will stop him. Your job as the agent assigned to this case is to complete the following two tasks:

Disrupt all efforts and demonise all school leaders, teachers, and staff challenging the *status quo* of educational quality at PHS.

Promote and celebrate school staff and community members that promote the *status quo* of educational quality.

Good luck, agent.

Ms Cunning

Status quo Commission

Vice-President, Teaching and Learning Division

New England Branch

Agent Wiley First Day on the Case

I walked into the café and settled down in a seat with a view of the meandering river and tree-canopied park across the street. It was an idyllic New England mid-October morning with a slight chill in the air, leaves bursting into brilliant colours, and deer strolling through the town park. I was in a zone of peace and tranquillity pleasantly accented with a hot cup of freshly brewed coffee and plate full of Italian sausage and fluffy scrambled eggs. Strangers greeted me warmly or nodded approvingly. I felt like I was part of a living Norman Rockwell painting. Potsdam was a picturesque and warm town. I unfolded the day's newspaper and looked to the front page to see the results of my work. I took a throat-stretching gulp of heavily sugared coffee, placed the cup back on the saucer, and focused on reading the feature article:

PDF- Authentic article

Potsdam's Gardino Contests Suspension; Said Team Was "Chicken You-Know-What."

February 01, 2007

Mike Gardino, who has won 533 games in 33 seasons as the boys' basketball coach at Potsdam High, said Wednesday he has been unfairly suspended by the school's new principal for publicly criticizing his team after a loss to Little Canyon High School.

After the 38-34 loss Saturday, Gardino told the *Valley Bulletin* and radio station WILYAM 1280, "You can't make chicken salad out of chicken you-know-what. And right now, we are chicken you-know-what." Gardino has contacted a teachers' union lawyer about fighting the two-game suspension he began serving Tuesday. He said his comments were not inappropriate given the context. Potsdam (4-10) had not lost to Little Canyon (3-13) since the 1991-1992 seasons, a 37-game streak.

"It was said in the heat of battle right after a game," Gardino said. "I didn't use any vulgarity or any swear words."

Gardino, 60, said he apologized to the team Tuesday. He said no players were offended, and he has not heard from parents.

"I've been the coach here for 33 years," Gardino said. "Last year we went to the state [Division IV] finals, and they were throwing rose petals at me. Now they're throwing rocks at me. How quickly things change."

William Barry, who has been principal at Potsdam for a month, suspended Gardino for two games and a week of practice. Barry called the "chicken you-know-what" comment inappropriate.

"I don't think this one error is going to tarnish a great career," Barry said. "But we have to be held accountable for what we say. Comments like that send the wrong message."

Williams said factoring also into the suspension was a letter that Gardino recently wrote to an Eastern Connecticut Conference referee. That is a violation of league procedure, which requires coaches to approach game officials through their athletic directors.

"For those two things, I felt there was just cause," Barry said.

Gardino said the referee answered his letter, which proves that it did not offend him.

"The principal said I didn't follow protocol," Gardino said. "He's been principal for 28 days. I've been coaching for 33 years."

Brower High Principal George Blair, the ECAP Chairman, said the league has no jurisdiction in the matter. He said the league is always concerned about sportsmanship.

"I wouldn't consider this to be his most positive statement, but we all say things we regret," Blair said of Gardino. "I've known Coach Gardino for a long time. He's a great man who has done a lot of positive things for kids."

Gardino, whose 533 wins rank fifth in state history, guided Potsdam to a Class S state championship in 1986. In 2005, he was inducted into the State High School Coaches Association Hall of Fame. In 2006, he was inducted into the Eastern American Region Basketball Hall of Fame.

Gardino will miss Friday's game at Wheeler-North Wellington and Tuesday's against St. Thomas-Cranville. He can return to practice Wednesday and coach in Potsdam's game at New Luster on Feb. 9.

"He'll be back Wednesday, and we'll all move on," Barry said.

End of PDF.

I took notice of one of the local residents, a dairy farmer, who had just finished an enormous stack of buttermilk pancakes. He was talking to a man dressed in a red town road worker uniform about the newspaper article I had just read.

"Public humiliation of the coach is totally uncalled for!" the farmer exclaimed.

A man dressed in the red town worker jumpsuit responded, "The principal's days are numbered! He is an outsider! Who does he think he is embarrassing our town hero?"

An elderly woman, wearing a dark blue jeans and a wool sweater with a home-sewn image of a black cat on the front, joined the conversation from an adjacent table: "The principal is a bad seed and needs to be removed. He has been here less than a month and he already thinks he has the right to challenge one the best men I have ever known! Our coach knows how to toughen boys up to be men ready for the harsh world out there." She waved her finger in a back-and-forth motion at the window looking out toward the town centre.

"Let's do something about it!" the server exclaimed. "We can start a demonstration, a protest, at the next town meeting or board of education meeting and get him fired."

"Good idea, but let's wait," said the farmer. "Hopefully, he'll quit on his own accord when he knows how much he is disliked and the threat someone will hurt him physically if he stays here." The farmer nodded to his fellow town folk, put on his black wool hat, and left the café with his face flushed red in anger.

I paid my bill, tipped my pointer finger in a quick gesture to the brim of my New York Yankees baseball hat to the server, and headed to my nondescript, American-made, white sedan. A two-game suspension of a high school basketball coach may not seem to you like a critical situation warranting deep concern to the casual observer. I usually would agree it seemed unlikely a quaint-looking New England town would be largely affected by a two-game suspension of the school's local basketball coach. However, if you knew the people of Potsdam, you would not be surprised. It is a community fiercely loyal to their high school's sports teams that reveres its town heroes and local celebrities (virtually unknown outside the confines of the area) and embraces with fervour predictability and routine. The basketball coach, Mike Giordano, had been at Potsdam High School as a teacher/coach for over thirty years, was a powerful local politician, and was infamous and celebrated for his behaviour of being belligerent toward school and sport officials. He employed bitingly sarcastic and demeaning language toward people he disliked and cruelly teased other people for laughs.

The key to maintaining the *status quo* understanding and modelling of quality in Potsdam was to ensure the town continued to have low expectations for Potsdam faculty and students and not to interfere with Giordano in any manner. He was perceived by the school and local community as a powerful man, and he was an ardent protector of the *status quo*. (My kind of guy!) Principal Barry had foolishly dared to interfere with Coach Giordano and had publically stated his high expectations of improving the way of faculty, staff, and students at PHS understood and modelled the meaning of quality.

As I began to drive back to my hotel room on the outskirts of the rural town, I saw three news vans with satellite dishes attached to their roofs rush into the Potsdam High School parking lot. I turned the car around and followed the news vans to the front of the school building. I strolled up to a woman with a news camera and asked what was happening.

"Excuse me, Miss. What's the story here?"

"Hall of Fame of Coach Mike Giordano was suspended by the new principal of the school."

"I read about it in the paper. Respectfully, what's the big deal? Why such a big story?

"You don't suspend and violate the constitutional rights of the most-winning basketball coach in state history without its being news. Have a nice day, Mister."

I walked up to a newscaster from another channel and asked, "How is this story worthy of television coverage? A small-town basketball coach with a two-game suspension doesn't seem to be 'breaking news.'"

She responded, "This story is just beginning, Mister. You don't embarrass state coaching legends like Mike Giordano by suspending them. This will get bigger, and we want to be on the story right from the beginning. Have a good day."

I walked back to my car with a smile and a hop in my step. I had leaked the suspension to the press as an alarming story of a Hall of Fame basketball coach's First Amendment rights being trampled on by a dictatorial, politically correct high school principal. I thought one channel at best would take the bait. However, all the major networks responded and were making it a leading story of the nightly news. It also was covered by every major newspaper in the state. I logged onto Google and searched if there were any response to the story by leading sports casters in the state. I discovered with great joy that popular television sports caster Larry Finn had blogged his disgust with Principal Barry:

If You Ask Me, It's Bull You-Know-What

Posted by Larry Finn on January 31st, 2007 at 08:06:07 pm

Give me a break.

I know it is early in the year, but suspending Potsdam's boys basketball coach Mike Giordano is a frontrunner for Dumb Move of the Year.

Here is the way I understand it. Potsdam lost a game, and the coach called out his team. *The Loughborough Bulletin* quoted him as saying, "You can't make chicken salad out of chicken you-know-what. And right now, we are chicken you-know-what."

The principal of the school, Bill Barry, who has been on the job less than a month, thought the comment was in bad taste and suspended the Hall of Fame coach for two games.

I'd say the principal either has you-know-what for brains or there's more to this story than is being reported.

And the principal doesn't seem to be the only one full of you-know-what. Board of Education member Jared Kurdos was quoted in the Bulletin as saying, "When you talk about a team like that, it doesn't help the confidence level."

His colleague on the board, Michael Maker, used the inane word "poop" to News Channel 9 when talking about what a hardship the Potsdam players must be going through as a result of the coach's comments.

Maker, by the way, used a much more profane word than the coach used.

A coach has to be able to criticize his players when they're not playing up to expectations. It's a motivational tool. If a coach criticizes, it means he thinks his players are good enough to play better.

Giordano didn't say anything profane; he didn't single anyone out for undo humiliation. He simply told a reporter what he thought of his team, and to suspend him for that is a real you-know-what thing to do.

A few days later, the story of Principal Barry's suspending the Hall of Fame coach was reported in the national media through the Associated Press (AP). The AP reported the coach was hiring a lawyer because he believed his First Amendment right of free speech had been violated. In a matter of a few days, the story had gone from a seemingly benign local story to a national level. With this kind of negative media coverage, the principal should not last much longer, and my case will be successfully closed. Nevertheless, I felt the need to learn about him. Just in case he survives the media barrage of negativity against him, I will need to know where to strike next to bring him down. I had set up a meeting under the guise that I wanted to talk to him about his new job as principal for my PhD dissertation at the state university.

The first thing I noticed was the principal's office décor of motivational art pieces, learning artefacts from students, and numerous interactive games that were on the shelves. He had an office library of approximately four hundred books on the shelves. Most of the book topics were constructivist teaching and learning, student-centred curriculum reform, humanistic education, existential philosophy, and performance-based learning and assessment. On his bookshelf was a large picture of a chrysalis in a lush green forest attached to a branch with a quote from *Don Quixote* printed in fancy lettering across the bottom: *Sanity may be madness but the maddest of all is to see life as it is and not as it should be*.

I noticed on his desk a paper he was writing to explain his perspective and learning about educational quality and what an effective school necessarily needed to embody. I picked up the papers and read them quickly, knowing I only had a half hour before Principal Barry would be back to the office to meet with me.

Transcriber Note: The following are excerpts from the information Agent Wiley sent our office via pictures he took of the documents with his smartphone.

Excerpts from Principal Barry's writing about quality, a PDF copy

Educational quality was poorly understood and modelled by American public high schools as numerical and/or letter grades as a valid and reliable assessment of a student's knowing and ability to learn. Class rank, assigning student learning groups by stratified "intelligence" levels, competitive grading of students against each other, exclusionary class offerings, and high levels of homework all inherently pit student against student and student against teacher through a systematic effort to promote quality as a materialistic concept of objectivity (Kohl, 1998; Kohn, 2011, 2004, 2000, 1999; Leonard, 1987, 1978).

Competitive ranking and grading of students and performance on standardized academic achievement tests implicitly inform each learner something akin to whether a student is smart, so he or she will get good grades. If a student is "gifted and talented," he or she will get the highest grades and test scores and rank higher than most of their classmates and will be celebrated for being the smartest and most talented. Conversely, if a student receives poor grades, that student is often considered lazy at best, dumb at worst. Essentially, low class rank and standardised test scores indicate that a student is lazier or dumber than most of their classmates.

The result of the state's public education's basing their expression of knowing and learning on grades, ranking, and state-mandated standardised testing lead to an understanding of quality that is critically incomplete, impoverished, and socially unjust. The state's public schools traditionally celebrate and promote the dimensions of logical mathematical, linguistic, and bodily kinaesthetic intelligence (Gardner, 2000, 1993) as sufficient to define and assess educational quality. The reason for this misguided notion of educational quality is mostly due to the materialist philosophy consciously and/or unconsciously followed by American secondary public schools. Scientific materialism is as an understanding of the laws of matter and motion that can explain reality (Ozmon and Craver, 1992). Essentially, matter and the physical are real, and the rest is imaginary. Psychologically adhering to such a theory is consistent with the behaviourist schools of thought and, to a lesser degree, the cognitive schools. There is discontinuity with the humanist (constructivist) and transpersonal schools of thinking, which I embrace. I am in my professional practice as an educator and as a researcher what I loosely categorise an existential-pragmatist.

Existentialists generally believe a good education consists of the following:

- Emphasis on individuality and possibility

- Fostering an understanding of anxiety

- Non-coercive education

- An "I/you/we" approach to others

- Helping students internalise the world and construct it radically and socially as their own (which implies a unity with others in a necessary relationship for a sense of self)

  - Dialogue

86

I have married these existential beliefs with a pragmatic (Dewey, 1938/1997; James, 1969; Kimball, 1995) and critical approach (Freire, 2001; Kincheloe, 2010; McLaren and Kincheloe, 2007) to education. Pragmatic educators generally believe public education is a necessity of life and that the following make for a good education:

- A belief, as Dewey (1938/1997) promoted, that education is a necessity and is about life itself, not a simply preparation for life

- An embracing of the ideals of democracy as the direction in which growth should occur

- A learning to support and develop a more democratic society

- Helping people direct and guide personal and social experience for the betterment of self and others

- Experiential discovery

- Facilitating the construction of positive mental and moral attitudes to use in facing modern problems

- Encouraging authentic problem solving

- Need-fulfilling meeting the best interests of the child

- Being broad in context rather than specialized

- Being experiential and reflective

- Having knowledge statements that are relative

Joel Spring (1991) stated that "the effective schools movement has a very distinct definition of a successful school; It is a definition that makes the results of achievement-test scores the major criteria of educational success" (p.102). Every secondary public school in our state is required to administer standardised achievement tests to its students. The tests address the socially accepted common core subjects of English, math, science, and, to a lesser degree, social studies. The results of student success or lack of success on

these mandated achievement tests are published in print and television media. *The American Ledger*, America's oldest operating newspaper, publishes the percentages of students who perform at proficiency/mastery levels (as set by the State Department of Education) at each school in the state. In addition, schools are categorised from the "highest performing" schools to the "lowest performing" across the state.

As an example, a school's sophomore class (generally fifteen- and sixteen-year-old students) may be reported by the newspaper as having 40 per cent of its members meet a standard of mastery or proficiency in a specific academic area. This forty per cent "success" rate is matched to the percentage of student success of other schools in the similar socio-economic community's school(s). This comparison serves to rank schools from the most successful to the least successful in educating students.

The state department of education and the general state populace use these scores as major criteria to judge school educational quality by the success rates its students have on the state-mandated standardised achievement tests. Public secondary schools and their boards of education (locally elected school officials) generally place great importance on high achievement on the standardised tests. School improvement plans in most public high schools in the state have as goals success and improvement on these standardised tests. Herein is the essence of the dilemma in understanding and modelling the meaning of quality in American education in general. Quality has been reduced to one dimension, the quantitative and materialistic, when in fact it is a multidimensional concept, both qualitative and quantitative. The problem, as I perceive it, is the futile attempt to reach a definitive definition of quality in education, when quality is in many ways indefinable and only understandable once it is experienced and the experience resonates with other people. Quality, from an educational perspective, is more akin to a way of being.

John Jay Bonstingl (2001), an international figure in "quality" education philosophy and application for public education, posits that:

Quality is a way of life. A lifelong journey of the spirit, body, and mind permeates all aspects of one's life. Quality grows first inside our heads and souls. Then it grows in our relationships with others. Whenever Quality becomes the essence of our being when we are alone and when we are with others, it naturally thrives in and defines our families and other groups to which we belong. (p.62)

Bonstingl (2001) presented a perspective of quality that is multidimensional, pragmatic and married to the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of quality into one conceptual understanding;

Ultimately, Quality becomes the essence of our schools, our workplaces, and our communities, and then of our society, and eventually of the global village of which we are a part… When the number of Quality-oriented people reaches a critical mass at a particular level, the Quality Philosophy naturally becomes the way of being at that level. People of Quality know that the Quality Philosophy adds immeasurable richness and value to their lives. (p.62)

Quality is understood in public secondary schools as based on grades, test scores, and low rates of discipline issues. Public high school principals and teachers most often assess the educational quality of a student by referencing a student's academic and disciplinary record. Considerations for higher ability classes, high school graduation, higher education opportunities, honours and awards, inclusion in extra-curricular activities, and scholarships are based primarily on a quantitative understanding of quality.

Bonstingl (2001) outlined "Five Personal Practices of Quality" to illustrate an integrated and holistic understanding of quality:

Bonstingl's (2001) Five Personal Practices of Quality

- Leadership

- Partnership

- Systems Thinking and Systems Actions

- Process Orientation

- Constant Dedication to Continuous Improvement (p.45).

Other notable researchers and writers concerning the understanding and modelling of quality in both a business and education context have expressed a similar belief that quality is best understood in the manner Bonstingl promoted, including Costa (1991), Deming (1992, 1986), Garvin (1988), Glasser (1999, 1998, 1992, 1990), Pirsig (1974, 1992), and Morita (1986).

Garvin (1988) offered a holistic definition of quality for consideration in a business context: "Five principal approaches to defining quality can be identified: the transcendent, product-based, user based, manufacturing based, and value-based" (p.40). The following is an abbreviated quotation of Garvin's table (1988, p.40-41) presenting examples to understanding quality's meaning within each of the five primary approaches he identified with accompanying illustrative references.

Transcendent Definition

- "Quality is neither mind nor matter, but a third entity independent of the two... even though Quality cannot be defined, you know what it is" (Pirsig, 1974/1981, p. 213).

- "… a condition of excellence implying fine quality as distinct from poor quality… Quality is achieving or reaching for the highest standard against being satisfied with the sloppy or fraudulent" (Tuchman, 1980, p. 38).

Product-Based Definition:

- "Differences in quality amount to differences in the quantity of some desired ingredient or attribute" (Abbott, 1955, pp. 126-127).

User-Based Definition

- "Quality consists of the capacity to satisfy wants" (Edwards, 1968, p.37).

- "Quality is fitness for use" (Juran, 1974, p.2).

Manufacturing-Based Definition

- "Quality [means] conformance to requirements" (Crosby, 1979, p. 15).

- "Quality is the degree to which a specified product conforms to a design or specification." (Gilmore, 1974, p. 16).

Value-Based Definition

- "Quality is the degree of excellence at an acceptable price and the control of variability at an acceptable cost" (Broh, 1982, p. 3).

- "Quality means best for certain customer conditions. These conditions are (a) the actual use and (b) the selling price of the product" (Feigenbaum, 1961, p. 1).

Garvin (1988) briefly commented about transcendent quality and his belief in its pragmatic unimportance: "The difficulty with this view it that is offers little practical guidance. To argue that the hallmarks of quality are 'intensive effort' and 'honesty of purpose' tells us little about how quality products differ from those that are run-of-the-mill. Quality remains maddeningly elusive" (p.42). Garvin stated, "according to the transcendent view, quality is synonymous with "innate excellence" … and more often it claims that quality cannot be defined precisely, that it is a simple, unanalyzable property we learn to recognise only through experience" (1988, p.41). Garvin viewed this as a severe limitation, so much so that this approach he considered useless for managers in

the business sector. What Garvin did not consider is that perhaps when it comes to learning and training this form of quality is inherently important and inextricably tied to the meaning of quality.

Garvin illuminated two major understandings of quality I found relevant in my search to improve the understanding and modelling of it in an educational context. One is that transcendent quality exists and it is a necessary part of any comprehensive or holistic understanding of quality. The second is that, whereas a case is made by Garvin that transcendent quality is the least important in the business understanding of quality, it is highly plausible that it is one of the most important in a public education context. Quality in public education certainly has something to do with intensive effort, honesty of purpose, and the ability to transcend the ego.

Frankl (1984) stated about transcendence:

By declaring that man is responsible and must actualize the potential meaning of his life, I wish to stress that the true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world rather than within man or his own psyche, as though it were a closed system. I have termed this constitutive characteristic "the self-transcendence of human existence." It denotes the fact that being human always points, and is directed, to something, or someone, other than oneself--be it a meaning to fulfill or another human being to encounter. The more one forgets himself—by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love—the more human he is and the more he actualizes himself. What is called self-actualization is not an attainable aim at all, for the simple reason that the more one would strive for it, the more he would miss it. In other words, self-actualization is possible only as a side-effect of self-transcendence. (p.133)

Associate Professor of Education at Northeastern University Robert L. Fried's

The Passionate Learner (2001) focused on how teachers and parents can help children reclaim the joy of discovery. Interestingly, Fried conceived of a transformational understanding of quality as an important element in helping children reclaim the joy of discovery and curiosity. He believed school stakeholders have a passion for excellence but structurally undermine discovery and passion in their conceptualisation of quality learning and knowing. One reason this occurred, he proposed, was that people often misunderstood what quality means.

Fried (2001) stated:

Quality and Excellence—these words are part of every ad for automobiles, mail-order foodstuffs, Internet clothing retailers, or retirement communities. It is what we want out of life, in the things we buy, but also in our relationships and life situations. We want quality and excellence in our children's education, too, but we're not sure what it looks like—how to assess the quality of a school our child is planning to attend, or how to tease it of our child's report card. (p.197)

My fascination with the concept of quality emanates from the fact that the word "quality" is all-pervasive in American culture and public schools, yet we are not sure what it looks like and how to assess it. As an example, I look at the school report card of my son, Liam, and my daughter, Jessica, and it tells me little about the quality of their knowing, development as learners, or how their intelligence is evolving. The school report card shows a percentage grade for a course, such as 83 per cent, and one or two comments that are chosen from a standardised list of comments from a computer program. After 180 days of going to school to learn, my children and I receive a school report that does not illustrate with any depth or breadth the meaning of quality as it relates to learning, knowing, or social, emotional, psychological development.

Fried (2001) proposed:

Proof of quality in our children's learning achievement is what we learn for, but grade point averages, honour roll listings, and award certificates are what most schools offer. In addition, confusion is too often what we settle for. As teachers, we want to know not only that our students are excited about and engaged in their learning, but also that they have learned *well*. We want evidence that the instruction we offer them results in excellent student performance. But again, all too often, we settle for something else: tests, grades, rates of attendance, or homework completion. (p.197-198)

Fried echoes my sentiment that the meaning of quality is defined in an impoverished manner in public education and requires a more robust and meaningful definition and conceptualisation.

Fried (2001) offered his understanding of the meaning of educational quality:

● Quality learning is something that only a student can achieve—it can't be done to you.

● Quality learning is how you feel about a learning experience that makes it special, that gives you a feeling of being connected to wonderful things, skills, and ideas.

● Quality learning is likely (at some point) to result in higher grades, but that's not the primary goal. In fact, it's quite possible that a particular teacher may not fully recognize it as valuable learning, because it doesn't conform to his or her expectations-but it's what *you* think make sense.

● Quality learning has a lot to do with making sure you see the connection between what you are learning and what's important in your life.

● Quality learning means separating the "busy work" from the aspects that have real meaning, and devoting energy to activities that are rich in meaning

(even if parents and child agree that doing what's expected by the teacher is also very important). The child should know that the parent respects the difference between true learning and busy work.

● Quality learning requires the parent to be both present and supportive, holding in check the voices that want to push the child toward short term, less-authentic rewards, and keeping in one's mind a vision of the child as a lifelong learner.

● Quality learning has a lot to do with taking what's given-an assignment from the teacher-and figuring out how to make it correspond to the child's idea of a quality experience, how to find an angle on the assignment that the child can be enthusiastic about (or at least help the child not feel insulted or overwhelmed by the assignment). (p.228-229)

Other notable education writers and philosophers bemoan a similar identification of quality's being ill-defined and needing to be reconceptualised as a holistic and transformational concept (Coles, 1990; Freire, 1998; Goleman, 1997; Glazer, 1999; Kohn, 2011, 2004; Leonard, 1991, 1987; Glasser, 1999, 1992; Sizer, 1992; Zohar and Marshall, 2000). These writers and I share the belief that the meaning of quality needs to be defined and conceptualised holistically with depth and breadth. This includes the importance of educators' and leaders' taking into account the milieu of human relationships if we are to meet the unique quality needs of students and other people in a life-affirming way.

The distortion of quality's meaning in American high school education is born from reductionist thought, a hallmark of public school thinking in America since the inception of mandatory public education in the mid-1800s. Reductionism breaks a whole into pieces and believes individual pieces are understandable apart from the original whole. This is what has occurred with understanding the concept of quality in

most American public high schools in the state I served as school principal. Most often a single factor, such as a grade/test score achievement, has been stripped away from the other dimensions of quality and is prised as the essence of what quality is and means.

Total Quality Education

It would seem that quality's meaning should be clear by understanding the literature concerning total quality education (TQE). Like its business analogue, total quality management (TQM), TQE aims to bring TQM principles to public schools. The problem with TQE schemes is to assume "total quality" means *total* quality. Total quality seemingly should mean quality in its totality of meaning, its existence in every dimension of meaning. In this regard, TQE is greatly insufficient.

TQE is based on Deming's 14 points, these effectively served as the foundation of the TQE approach to understanding quality's meaning. As the 14 points were initially created for the business community, these points were interpreted and adapted to meet the needs of the education system. Schmoker and Wilson are prominent researchers and pioneers in the development of TQE as an adaptation of TQM. Their adaptation serves as a proposed benchmark for identifying the meaning of educational quality. The following is Schmoker and Wilson's 14 essential points of TQE:

1. Create constancy of purpose toward improvement of product and service. "The primary, though not exclusive, purpose for educators should be academic achievement, a commitment to improving the quality of education we provide students" (p.11).

2. Adopt the new philosophy. "Everyone in the organization must adopt the new philosophy, basing decisions on facts and data rather than on opinions" (p.11).

3. Cease dependence on mass inspection. "Quality does not come from

inspection by management of everything that workers do. It comes from managing employees in ways that encourage them to monitor and inspect their own work and from teaching them to do better, both as individuals and teams" (p.11-12).

4. End the practice of awarding business on the basis of price tag alone. "Achieving quality is more important than always trying to get the lowest price for supplies used in a product" (p.12).

5. Improve constantly and forever the system of production and service. Improvement is conceived as not simply a one-time effort. "The important point here is that we must never rest, no lesson plan, no school structure or arrangement is ever perfect. (p.13).

6. Institute training. Deming professed that training is essential to an employee carrying out his work with satisfaction. As an internal customer of the educational process, TQE is focused on ensuring that employees have a sense of satisfaction in their work (p.13).

7. Institute Leadership. "Here, leadership is not supervision but rather finding ways to help workers improve" (p.13).

8. Drive out fear. "Management must relentlessly eliminate anything that inhibits risk taking, collaboration, and improvement. Fear keeps people from experiencing joy of labor, which is essential if we want people to do their best work, to make their best contribution toward optimizing the system" (p.14).

9. Break down barriers between staff areas. "Trust and communication between management and employees ensures efficiency and constancy of purpose" (p.14).

10. Eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets for the workforce. Targets

set without management commitment can lead to employee focus on quantity instead of quality. Slogans should come from the employees if they desire, therefore, having intrinsic meaning (p.14).

11. Eliminate numerical quotas or targets for the workforce. "For Deming the only proper use of data is to help employees to perform better and to take pride in their workmanship" (p.14).

12. Remove barriers to pride of workmanship. "Management must systematically remove anything that interferes with the pride people take in their work-the most vital but intangible element of quality and improvement. People should be able to experience the 'joy of labor' without unnecessary interference" (p.15).

13. Encourage education and self-improvement for everyone. Good people are hard to come by. To maintain a high quality workforce, there must be many opportunities for professional growth and personal fulfilment (p.15).

14. Put everyone in the company (school) to work to accomplish the transformation. The transformation is everybody's job. "The emphasis on teamwork, building consensus, and using everyone's respective expertise is what makes this transformation possible" (p.16).

Since the year 1999, there has been no TQE-based school in existence in the state, to my knowledge. A thorough search of the Internet using multiple search engines revealed that no state secondary public schools had officially adopted a TQE perspective. Therefore, the TQE meme for understanding the meaning of quality was ineffective in the state in which I worked.

Is Quality Synonymous with Better?

Popularly, in the business (Brocka and Brocka, 1993; Covey, 1992, 2000;

98

Creech, 1994; Crosby, 1979; Dale and Cooper, 1992; Dion, 1995; Froiland, 1993; Fuchsberg, 1992; Garvin, 1984; Harario, 1993; Hammer, 1996; Lankard, 1992; Kwan, 1996; Law and Law, 1994; Lawler, Mohrman and Ledford, 1998; Leads Corporation, 1993; Olson, 1992; Peters and Austin, 1985) and education literature (Bonstingl, 1992; Cole, 1999; Germano, 1997; Schmoker, 1992; Schmoker and Wilson, 1993; Spring, 1991; Ravitch, 1985; Schlechty, 1997, 1990) quality is defined and understood as being affiliated with a high degree of goodness or excellence and/or as meeting predetermined quality standards. The understanding of quality's meaning, therefore, seems to be, simply, "It's better." This may work for products, but this definition of quality for the social services sector, specifically public education, is problematic at best. Cultural, socio-economic, individual values and preferences, and regional paradigms influence how quality's meaning is understood. What's better to one person may not be better to another. This could lead a person to believe that understanding quality's meaning intersubjectively is often untenable. What use is the word "quality" if it means "It's better," and a notable percentage of people have differing ideas of what better means? It seems little.

Pirsig (1974) declared, "But some things are better than others, that is, they have more quality" (p.184). In the state in which I served as high school principal, "better" and "quality" were often seen as synonymous. Yet is this true? Does quality's meaning in a public school context necessitate being "better," or are it and "quality" not necessarily well-matched terms?

Deming's fourteen points and their accompanying pragmatic philosophy are concepts by which Americans came to understand quality in greater depth in the 1980s (Schmoker and Wilson, 1993). Yet, believing that Deming and his followers in the quality movement in leadership/management have brought us as far as we can go in

understanding quality's meaning in secondary public education was a critical mistake.

If quality is simply synonymous with "better," there arises a pragmatic problem for using quality as a vision and guide for secondary public education in Potsdam. If "better" is followed to its ultimate conclusion, we arrive at the concept of "best". "Best" would then represent the essence of what quality means. However, the democratic tenets America is founded upon support the ideal that in public education quality should be optimised for all American children to experience, not only the perceived best.

Author and education philosopher Alfie Kohn (1999) stated that the word "competitive" is popularly seen in American culture as synonymous with quality (p.37). He believed that quality, at least in an educational context, was not synonymous with "competitive," nor was it often even compatible. What education professionals must realise, he believed, is that there is a profound difference between victory and quality.

On what basis does Kohn make such a pronouncement? On the basis that quality is supposedly not about "winners" and "losers." Unfortunately, Kohn does not explicitly describe quality's meaning, but he does so implicitly through the theme of his American bestselling education books (2004, 2000, 1999, 1996, and 1986). One theme of his collective works is that quality's meaning is not about rewards, coercion, grades, standardised test scores, or even winning. What education professionals must understand is that there is a profound difference between "victory" and "quality." This understanding of quality's meaning in public education was embraced by a plethora of notable education researchers and writers (Buber, 1981; Dewey, 1938; Csikszentmihalyi, 1993, 1990; Freire, 2001,1998; Gardner, 1991 and 1985; Glasser, 2002,1999, 1998, 1992, 1990; Glazer, 1999; Goleman, 1997; Holt, 1995; Hooks, 1994; Kohn, 1999, 1996; Kozol, 1991; Krishnamurti, 1953; Lantieri, 2001; Leonard, 1991, 1987, 1968; Meier, 2000; Miller, 1991; Pope, 2001; Postman, 1969; Remen and Glazer,

1999; Rodgers, 1980, 1969/1983; ; Sloan, 1984; Steiner, 1996a, 1996b, 1994; Tobin, 2001; Wilber 1998b).

Dewey (1938) wrote in the conclusion of *Experience and Education*:

What we want and need is education pure and simple, and we shall make surer and faster progress when we devote ourselves to finding out just what education is and what conditions have to be satisfied in order that education may be a reality and not a name or a slogan. It is for this reason alone that I have emphasised the need for a sound philosophy of experience. (p.91)

Eureka! Public education discourse about the meaning of quality was missing a philosophy of quality as an experience. It is as if quality had been defined in public education with either the product or the process of learning in mind. However, one factor often seemed to be left out in the meaning of quality: the actual, dynamically composed person and his or her experience of quality.

What Do We Know About the Public School Paradigm and What Do We Need?

One of the first things that need to be decided in attempting to understand the meaning of quality in an American public school context is to define the paradigm within which it operates. The provider-customer paradigm is the most popular American public school paradigm. This paradigm is endemic in the quality management literature related to public education. Consistently the provider-customer paradigm appears as the prevailing paradigm quality should operate within. The school is posited as the provider and students and parents as the customers. However, a reasonable and thoughtful review of public education's mission in a democratic culture shows this paradigm orientation to be an error of judgement.

In actuality, the beneficiary-stakeholder paradigm is the most philosophically accurate for understanding the general interplay between people and public education in

America. Students are beneficiaries of public education. The rest of the citizenship is a stakeholder to some degree. The nature of the beneficiary-stakeholder relationship in a public education context, the element that integrates the relationship, is the search for meaning and "truth." American public education, especially at the high school level, is philosophically based on the idea that education and the search for truth should be synonymous. As Krishnamurti (1953/1981) states, "without a search for truth, society soon decays" (p.96).

Embracing the beneficiary-stakeholder paradigm usually requires a belief in what Buber (1958/1981) called "I-You/We" relationships as discussed in chapter two of the thesis. Due to the interpersonal nature of the beneficiary-stakeholder paradigm, a more profound understanding of quality's meaning is required than in, for example, a customer-provider relationship. It requires an understanding of quality that is integrative, dynamic, emergent, and systems-based. It seems that, even though the provider-customer paradigm is the most popular for public education, the beneficiary-stakeholder paradigm is a superior and more accurate paradigm for public education in light of America's being a democratic culture based on the belief its citizens have the inalienable rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

What if public education had a pragmatic understanding of quality's meaning that was embraced by students, teachers, and school officials in an intersubjectively valid way within the beneficiary-stakeholder paradigm? Such an understanding of quality could be transformative for people and enhance the learning and knowing process. I set out to discover if such understanding of the meaning of quality could be identified and comprehensively articulated.

Determining a Starting Point for Exploring Quality＇s Meaning

I aimed at discerning a progressive understanding of "quality," embracing the

basic tenet that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. I rejected reductionist, static definitions of quality that claim to be complete and sought a holistic understanding of quality's meaning that was dynamic and pragmatic. As a point of departure for my exploration into understanding the meaning of quality in a transformative way, I began with Akio Morita's understanding of quality's meaning.

Morita, the co-founder of Sony, described the existence of a "deeper understanding" of quality. He believed true quality elicits "love" (qtd. in Costa, 1991, 88). It was seemingly the notion of "love" that escaped the eye of notable leading quality experts (Crosby, 1979; Hammer, 1996).

Costa (1991) built on Morita's "love" distinction in quality:

This is where the pursuit of quality engages the spiritual potential of the humans involved in every step of the business process. Managers intrinsically concerned about quality must become the sources of love; love for customers, love for the product that serves those customers, and love for the employees who produce those products… Love enriches life, providing satisfaction to both its source and its object. Love is often expressed by putting the interests of another before your own. Love requires nurturing and near-constant attention. Love involves sacrifice and a large degree of selflessness. Such language and spiritual context are, admittedly, uncomfortable for most business people. (p.88)

The search for quality's meaning in either products or in processes seemed a core reason why quality's meaning was often seemingly ambiguous, confusing, and relegated to rhetorical status. Perhaps, I hypothesised, it was in exploring people's values systems, what they love, and correlating beliefs regarding quality's meaning that would bring a transformative paradigm of understanding quality that was valid, holistic, and pragmatic.

There existed the possibility that a transformative "quality" meme was already in existence. If so, perhaps it simply had not been clearly pointed out yet. Evidence of a transformative meme of quality seemingly trying to emerge can be viewed in the work of researchers and philosophers who essentially believed the idea of quality needs to be understood in a more holistic, need-fulfilling, and values-based manner (Bache, 2008; Beck and Cowan, 1996; Brooks and Brooks, 2003; Covey, 2000, 1992; Csikszentmihalyi, 1998; Kohn, 2011, 2004; Kozol, 1991; Glasser, 1999. 1998, 1992, 1990; Glazer, 1999; Hart, 2001; Lantieri, 2001; Leonard, 1995, 1991, 1987, 1978; Noddings, 2005; Senge et al., 2000; Sergiovanni, 2005, 1994; Sizer, 1992; Wilber, 2001d, 1998a).

Transcriber Note: These were the last pictures of the documents Agent Wiley was able to send as Principal Barry entered the office to meet with him.

Agent Wiley's Notes: When the principal met with me, he seemed warm and personable with a light-hearted sense of humour. Nothing seemed to fit with the description of the authoritarian ogre I had heard about in town or read about in the local paper. (This is even more proof of how good I am at my job of promoting simulacrums!) He told me he was conducting multiple living theory action research projects to improve his leadership through improving his understanding and modelling of educational quality as a life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing concept. After exchanging some obligatory niceties about the weather and the local sports teams, I asked him to share with me the action research projects he was to introduce into the school community.

Principal Barry: "I started a living theory action research project to answer the question, 'How can I improve my life-affirming and need-fulfilling capacity to understand and model the meaning of educational quality to improve the social and academic milieu of the school?' I developed criteria for success in answering this essential question."

He paused to hand me a piece of paper.

"The paper you are looking defines my objectives for success, and consequently, on how I judged myself and asked to be judged by other people."

I read the paper he handed me.

Criteria for Success

My leadership influenced empirical school reform and improvement of the social and academic milieu of the school culture by improving the life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing understanding and modelling of educational quality by students, teachers, staff, sport coaches, and me as the school principal.

I demonstrated notable improvement in having my leadership thinking, behaviour, and decisions be congruent with my humanistic and critical educational values and beliefs. In other words, I improve in decreasing my representation of myself as a living contradiction.

"Is this an acceptable bellwether of judging the merit of my action research, Mr Wiley?"

Agent Wiley: "Yes, and I don't see how, in light of the newspaper articles and blogs I have read already, you will ever meet these criteria for success. Few who read the articles would disagree with me. It appears you are about promoting your own agenda and getting rid of people or disciplining those who cross you. You were a principal for less than a month before you suspended one of those most beloved basketball coaches and teachers in the school. How do you make sense of your behaviour and decisions considering what you state you are trying to accomplish through action research? How can your idea of quality possibly lead to results such as suspending the Hall of Fame coach?"

Principal Barry looked at me kindly.

"May I pour you a cup of tea? I have a true story to tell you, Mr Wiley."

Transcriber Note: Principal Barry's story, I believe, is best reflected through excerpts from his personal journals that we procured from his personal library through one of our operatives. He did speak at length with Agent Wiley, but his journals tell the story better for the archive, in my opinion. The information lays the groundwork for Principal Barry's felt need to conduct action research foolishly to challenge the *status quo* of educational quality.

The Story Before It Became a "Story"

Transcriber: The following excerpt is from one of William Barry's ten personal/research journals he kept on his home office bookshelf. We were able to procure a copy of it through our agency operatives. We photocopied it and returned it to his home before he even realised it was gone. I will insert information from his journals, as it is relevant to Case number 2525. This excerpt is from his journal labelled "Number Three." It shows the genesis of his misguided idea the concept of quality requires deeper thought about its meaning and the implications of its meaning on human thought and development.

Robert Pirsig's (1974), *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*: The Genesis of My Passion to Understand and Model a Life-Affirming, Need-Fulfilling, and Performance-Enhancing Sense of Quality in My Educational Leadership

The world according to Pirsig (1992, 1974) consists of mind, matter, and quality. It is not a "thing"; it is an event. It is not so much a noun as it is a verb. Interestingly, this is how Glasser (1998) categorised quality as well, as a verb and not as a noun. The difference this makes is profound in understanding and modelling quality in an educational context, and it is a difference I believe important to recognise:

> He noted that although normally you associate Quality with objects, feelings of Quality sometimes occur without any object at all. This is what led him at first to think that maybe Quality is subjective. However, subjective pleasure was not what he meant by Quality either. Quality *decreases* subjectivity. Quality takes you out of yourself, makes you aware of the world around you. Quality is *opposed* to subjectivity…He saw that Quality could not be independently related with either the subject or the object but could be found only in the relationship of the two with each other. It is at the point which subject and object meet…Quality is the event at which awareness of both subjects and objects is made possible. (Pirsig 1974, p.239)

Pirsig (1974) believed that to understand quality a person must embrace the affective domains of being human and unite the classic and romantic understanding of the concept.

> …classic understanding should not be overlaid with romantic prettiness; classic and romantic understanding should be united at a basic level. In the past our common universe of reason has been in the process of escaping, rejecting the romantic, irrational world of prehistoric man. It's been necessary since before

the time of Socrates to reject the passions, the emotions, in order to free the rational mind for an understanding of nature's order which was as yet unknown. Now it's time to further an understanding of nature's order by reassimilating those passions which were originally fled from. The passions, the emotions, the affective domain of man's consciousness, are a part of nature's order too. The central part (p.294).

Pirsig believed quality is something that unites classic and romantic understanding. This conceptualisation of quality is quite different from "meeting customer expectation" or "meeting a predetermined standard" as quality is popularly understood in current American quality literature in education and business (most notably in total quality management and total quality education schemes).

Pirsig (1974) wrote:

Peace of mind isn't at all superficial to technical work. It's the whole thing. That which produces it is good work and that which destroys it is bad work. The specs, the measuring instruments, the quality control, the final check-out, these are all means toward the end of satisfying the peace of mind of those responsible for the work. What really counts in the end is their peace of mind, nothing else. The reason for this is that peace of mind is a prerequisite for a perception of that Quality which is beyond romantic Quality and classic Quality and which unites the two, and which must accompany the work as it proceeds. The way to see what looks good and understand the reasons it looks good , and to be at one with this goodness as the work proceeds, is to cultivate an inner quietness, a peace of mind so that goodness can shine through. (p. 294)

Fly-fishing on a remote part of a river, mountain biking alone in forests, deep woods camping, reading an engrossing book, spending time with loved ones, helping

colleagues and students learn and meet their goals: in these experiences, I have often experienced a remarkable inner peace and connections with other people and my surroundings. The categorisation of these experiences according to Pirsig as quality resonated with me strongly.

Pirsig (1974) elaborated on the relationship of inner peace with quality:

I say inner peace of mind… It involves unselfconsciousness, which produces a complete identification with one's circumstances, and there are levels and levels of this identification and levels and levels of quietness quite as profound and difficult of attainment as the more familiar levels activity. The mountains of achievement are Quality discovered in one direction only, and are relatively meaningless and often unobtainable unless taken together with the ocean trenches of self-awareness-so different from self-consciousness-which result from inner peace of mind. (p. 295)

Pirsig believed inner peace of mind occurs at three levels of understanding: Physical, mental, and value. Physical quietness is keeping your body at total rest. Mental quietness is when "one has no wondering thoughts at all" (p. 295). Value quietness is when "one has no wandering desires at all but simply performs the acts of his life without desire" (p. 295). "I've sometimes thought this inner peace of mind, this quietness is similar to if not identical with the sort of clam you sometimes get when going fishing, which accounts for much popularity of the sport" (p. 295).

Fishing: being a fly-fishing enthusiast, I immediately had a mental image of fly-fishing in the picturesque Salmon River on a warm, light breezy, sunny day: the feeling of being at one with the river and being fully immersed, body and mind, in the moment. Is this experience of transcending myself and being fully in the moment an indicator of experiencing and understanding quality? According to Pirsig, it was.

We've all had moments of that sort when we're doing something we really want to do. It's just that somehow we've gotten into an unfortunate separation of those moments from work. The mechanic I'm talking about doesn't make this separation. One says of him that he is "interested" in what he is doing, that he's "involved" in his work. What produced this involvement is, at the cutting edge of consciousness, an absence of any sense of separateness of subject and object. "Being with it", "being a natural", "taking hold"—there are a lot of idiomatic expressions for what I mean by the absence of subject-object duality, because what I mean is so well understood as folklore, common sense, the everyday understanding of the shop. But in scientific parlance the words for this absence of subject-object duality are scarce because scientific minds have shut themselves off from consciousness of this kind of understanding in the assumption of the formal dualistic scientific outlook. (p. 296)

In the spring of 1992, I read voraciously the literature of the transcendentalist movement in America, most notably Thoreau's *Walden*, which I read repeatedly with immeasurable intrigue, and rereading Pirsig's (1974), *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* and *Lila* (1992). A few questions preoccupied me at this time in my journey through life: "What is quality? What does it intersubjectively mean? What does it mean to me?" Within a month, I found myself in a small, one-person log cabin in Chugach State Park in Alaska, far from my New England roots. Working as one of four volunteer ranger assistants (chosen from over five hundred applicants), I placed myself in an environment unlike anything I had ever been immersed in before. I assumed living in a place as beautiful, majestic, and mysterious as the Alaskan wilderness optimised my chances at understanding and modelling quality and the meaning of my life. The assumption, in retrospect, proved correct. The seeds for my PhD and my career as an

educator and education leader were planted.

The cabin was nestled on the fringe of the second largest state park in the United States, over 500,000 acres of pristine wilderness and an environment of majestic beauty and eerie danger (home to packs of roaming wolves, angry moose, grizzlies, and black bears). It provided an environment that I considered the perfect mix between beauty and fear. This made for a unique experience of interacting and perceiving the world that brought me both great joy and existential anxiety.

I noticed I often used the term "quality" in reference to something's meeting or exceeding my expectations. Other times, I referred to quality when perceiving something to be imbued with a high level of excellence, goodness, or beauty; yet there was a plethora of times I conceptualised quality in a different manner. An example of this was in the following citation from my battered leather journal I kept while living in the woods of Chugach State Park:

Alaska, April 1992: I am alone in the woods, over 500,000 acres of pristine wilderness. My fellow ranger assistants are not going to be here for another week. I am scared out of my mind, but the beauty here seems to be the factor that allows me to get through the fear. Last night I saw a moose outside my cabin and heard a pack of wolves singing an eerie melody and variety of other noises I have never heard and cannot identify. I am sitting here looking out my front window, staring at the snow-covered peaks of the mountains surrounding me. I just realized I have been sitting here for approximately an hour. Where did the time go? I don't remember anything, only that I have been sitting here in awe, fear, exhilaration, and mystery of the beauty and majestic environment in which I am immersed. Everything here is *quality*, and I feel totally immersed in it; yet now as I write and reflect on the time that has passed, I feel like a foreigner, like an intruder. I have noticed that these feelings have been consistent over the past week. For long periods of time, which I only realize after becoming cognizant of time, I identify fully with the environment and wildlife before me. At other times, I am full of fear and am aware of my vulnerable existence here and feel my very existence threatened.

What would Pirsig say about all of this? Is *quality* different for me up here alone in this divine environment?

Other journal entries, after my Alaska experience, reveal a similar conceptualisation of quality.

> **May 1999:** Awesome workshop. It was the highest *quality* workshop I have ever done. It was if it were not even I doing the speaking and listening. I felt as if there were an energy force where we all met together in unity. Everyone was into it. We all connected with each other, and somehow I was the conduit by which all this connection was occurring. The three hours passed by in what seemed in retrospect like a half-hour. I felt invincible, not in an egotistical way. It was because my ego disappeared that I felt no nervousness or tension; it was as if I were feeding on the crowd's energy and they on mine. But this feeding on energy was not like a consuming phenomenon; it was more of an exchange. It sounds odd, but I felt a kind of love for everyone. It was beautiful!

> **June 2001:** Research Fest in England. *Quality, quality, quality*!!! My PowerPoint presentation failed today; yet, oddly I didn't feel the slightest bit nervous. I simply grabbed the overhead backups I made and entered the flow of the situation. I could literally sense the breathing and heartbeat of everyone. It seemed to be in total unison. I looked directly into the eyes of those around me and sensed no malice, no negative energy; it was simply just positive energy flowing throughout the room. I felt high when the presentation was over. I was exhausted though I had only been speaking for fifteen minutes, the experience was so intense. I can't imagine in retrospect if I could have handled the amount of energy I felt for more than the fifteen minutes. *Quality* seems to have something to do with this energy. It's palpable, yet words cannot really describe the depth and breadth of the experience. *Quality*, this new understanding of quality I am coming to know so well, seems to have something to do with this energy.

Pirsig spoke of understanding and embracing quality as a way to improve the

world. Yet he did not advocate a person to start by working on others to understand and embrace quality. He believed a person must start with his or herself. The place to improve the world is first in one's own heart, and quality will emanate from there. It is in "just fixing" a motorcycle, becoming one with it, that Pirsig himself so clearly experienced quality, and in doing so shared with his readers that quality is everywhere around us, one has just to do it.

Pirsig stated people have gumption when they connect with quality (Pirsig 1974, p.303). Gumption, as Pirsig used it, refers to having courage and initiative to stick with something when obstacles are in the way. This is similar to what Jack Whitehead (2010) spoke of when he talked about re-channelling negative energy into life-affirming energy when experiencing what he called "narrative wreckage" and being resilient in the face of pressure to violate one's own values (Whitehead and Delong, 2008). Pirsig believed people who connect with quality are filled with gumption (1974, p.272-273). He revisited the angler example of inner peace of mind, and related that, "the returned fisherman usually has a peculiar abundance of gumption usually for the very same things he was sick to death of a few weeks before. He hasn't been wasting time; it's only our limited cultural viewpoint that makes it seem so…Gumption is the psychic gasoline that keeps the whole thing going" (p.303). Gumption is viewed by Pirsig as so critical to connecting with quality. He states, "The thing that must be monitored at all times and preserved before anything else is the gumption" (p.304).

Though *Zen and the Art* enjoys international acclaim and has been in print for more than thirty years, there are critics who found Pirsig's quality theory wanting. Three critiques stand out the most notably to me. Eva Hoffman, in *Commentary*, "thinks ZMM tries too hard, solves pseudo-problems, oversimplifies, and loses judgement because of the narrator's isolation (DiSanto and Steele 340). Richard Todd, in *Atlantic*

114

Monthly, "claims the author-narrator lacks "a developed sense of the inevitable mutuality of experience" (DiSanto and Steele 341). Lastly, Richard Schuldenfrei, in *Harvard Educational Review*, "notes that many of the Chautauqua's [quality] principles are inapplicable in our complex mass society" (DiSanto and Steele 342).

Appreciating Pirsig's text immensely, one may find it odd I found solace in these critics' words. Yet I did. These criticisms are the same ones I had to varying degrees. Until reading them, I felt extremely isolated in my thinking. The book was a bestseller, a plausible testimony to the attraction people have to his understanding and modelling of quality. His thinking touched a chord, especially with the American public, and the question that begged an answer was whether people really experience, understand, and conceptualise quality in the way Pirsig promoted. The action research of this thesis explored this question through co-investigation and self-reflection.

Authors regarding the meaning of quality, such as Deming (1992, 1986), Morita, Reingold, and Shimomura (1986), Hammer (1996), Crosby (1979), Aguayo (1991), Walton (1991), Creech (1994), and related quality management authors and thinkers, such as Glasser (1999, 1998, 1992, 1990), Senge (2000, 1999), Bonstingl (1992), Schmoker and Wilson (1993), and Covey (1992, 2000), affiliate quality implicitly with intense feelings such as joy, profound satisfaction, and co-operation. Yet, if we take a step further and, rather than affiliate quality with joy, we affiliate joy, a profound sense of satisfaction, and co-operation with quality, a new view of quality is conceivable. This is not a tautology, as the shift in meaning is immense in content and context. By having these experiences affiliated with quality, quality is a dynamic process that initiates experiences such as joy, happiness, and satisfaction because of the experience.

Thinkers/writers/researchers providing theoretical support that quality is a dynamic process include William James (1976, 1969, 1958) and, most notably, his

construct of radical empiricism, Ken Wilber's (2001a-d, 2000, 1996) consciousness research, George Leonard (1995, 1991, 1987, 1978) and his sense of education, ecstasy and mastery, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1998, 1993, 1990) and his conception of flow experience. There are also Glasser (1999, 1998, 1992, 1990) and his research concerning quality schooling and his internal motivation theory, choice theory; Grof (1993, 1988), his research on the holotropic mind, and research on intuitive knowledge; and transpersonal philosophers such as Braud and Anderson (1998) and Jenny Wade (1996). Additional supporting texts include inspiration research by Hart (2000), moral leadership research by Sergiovanni (1992), leadership research by Johnson, (1993), peak experience research of Maslow (1968) and Leonard and Murphy (1995), and education philosophers of teaching/learning such as Holt (1995), Kohl (1998), Rogers (1980) and Shapiro (1998), and the multiple intelligence research of Howard Gardner (2000, 1993, 1991).

The "right" internal conditions are what facilitate an experience with quality. The ideal internal condition for quality experience is to be able to become egoless (Lenz, 1996; Leonard, 1991, 1969; Suzuki, 1969/1972), something I struggle with as an educational leader and that has caused me at times to act as a living contradiction between my values and beliefs and the way I conduct myself. Egolessness is a key Buddhist notion called *anatta*. In defining egolessness, I found Mark Epstein's (1993) definition to be the most comprehensive, succinct, and pragmatic. He states in his essay, "The Varieties of Egolessness": "Egolessness us understood here as the equivalent of Wilhelm Reich's orgasmic potency, and the ego is identified as anything that tenses the body, obscures the capacity for pleasurable discharge, or gets in the way of feeling "free" (p.121). Epstein (1993) continues:

Another popular misconception is that egolessness is some kind of oneness or merger, a forgetting of the self with a simultaneous identification with what lies outside the ego, a trance state or an ecstatic union. Freud described the "oceanic feeling" as a sense of limitlessness and unbounded oneness with the universe that seeks the "restoration of limitless narcissism" and the "resurrection of infantile helplessness." Thus, egolessness is identified with the infantile state prior to the development of the ego, that is, that of the infant at the breast making no distinction between itself and its mother but rather merged in a symbiotic and undifferentiated union. (p.121-122)

Yet Epstein states this is not representative of the Buddhist notion of egolessness: "Egolessness is not a return to the feeling of infancy—an experience of undifferentiated bliss or a merger with the mother—even though many people may seek such an experience when they begin to mediate, and even though some may actually find a version of it" (1993, p.122). Epstein quotes the Dalai Lama to illustrate to what egolessness refers: "Selfishness is not a case of something that existed in the past becoming non-existent. Rather, this sort of "self" is something that never did exist. What is needed is to identify as non-existent something that always was non-existent" (1993, p.122-23). Therefore, "It is not that the ego disappears, but that the belief in the ego's solidity, the identification with ego's representations, is abandoned in the realization of egolessness" (Hart, 2001, p.123).

Implicit in this belief is that the ego does not represent fundamental reality. Ego is a human construct that, when examined, is found to be lacking solidity, validity, and reliability. Egolessness is, according to Epstein and the Dali Lama, our natural predisposition, and we have seemingly forgotten this truth due to our adherence and embrace of an illusion that ego is essential to our existence and individuality. I, for one,

spent my entire conscious life believing my ego was essential to my identity only to realize through my experience as an educator and education leader that I was greatly mistaken. Admittedly, it took years of dialogue, reading, researching, reflection, and mediation to be able to understand the mistaken view of ego and egolessness I had constructed during my lifetime. It was a tremendously difficult task analysing the possibility that the Dali Lama and Epstein's understanding of ego was a pragmatic and more accurate method of understanding ego than the construct of ego I had previously embraced.

Transcriber Note: This is the end of relevant citations from Principal Barry's journal.

Agent Wiley: So what kind of leader are you? You seem on one hand to be authoritative, another liberal, and another *laissez faire*. How are you a quality-conducive and focused leader? It seems, respectfully, Principal Barry, to be in fact ego-driven by you. How does this resonate with you?

Principal Barry: Thank you for your feedback, Mr Wiley, and the answer is that I am participatory and authoritative, not authoritarian, in my leadership approach. Being authoritative can be needed in critical situations and in dealing with timely issues that do not allow time for a participatory approach. There is a plethora of routine operation issues that do not lend themselves to participatory leadership. My decisions from an authoritative orientation take into account the needs and input of the people I serve, so the decisions though an authoritative approach are born from a participatory mind-set. I do not see this as ego-driven. I see it as quality-driven in a way that is life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing.

Agent Wiley: Help me understand, Principal Barry, how suspending the town hero and Hall of Fame coach in your first month of the principalship was congruent with this life-affirming and need-fulfilling sense of quality you profess to embrace and are trying to find a deeper understanding of in your leadership. It made you terribly unpopular in town. How are you to influence anyone when you are an enemy now of some of the most powerful people both in the school and in the local community?

Transcriber Note: The following is the story Principal Barry told Agent Wiley about the suspension of Mike Giordano, the town hero and Hall of Fame coach to whom Agent Wiley referred. It was critical we received this information to ensure we knew where in the story we needed to place inaccuracies or deletions to ensure we could upset his action plan. I have chosen to put Principal Barry's response in transcript form and not record the interjections and conversational nuances that occurred. I believe this is the most succinct manner in which to record the history.

Official Transcript of Principal Barry's Story of the Giordano Suspension

Two weeks into my new principalship, I received phone calls from numerous parents concerned about comments Mike made after a varsity basketball game. Three staff members also shared their concerns regarding Mike's post-game comments on the radio. Our school team had lost the game, and the coach's comment on live radio about his team loss was, "You can't make chicken salad out of chicken you-know-what, and right now we are chicken you-know-what." The parents and teachers who brought this to my attention believed the comments were disrespectful and wanted to know what I was going to do about it. The complaint was that "you know what" clearly referred to the word "shit." The people concerned believed the coach was in essence saying: "You can't make a good team out of awful players." The reports I received were that the coach often made despairing remarks about other people, and school officials consistently ignored his behaviour, which included smoking cigarettes in the locker room in front of his players and demeaning sport officials with a barrage of swearing and mocking comments.

Mike was a highly touted coach who was inducted into the State and New England Sports Hall of Fame. He was a leading town politician as the Chairperson of the board of Finance, and was close friends with local leaders such as the mayor, the police chief, and community members who had played on his team during his more than thirty years of teaching and coaching at the school. School leaders in the district and board of education members warned me to tread carefully around Mike because he had successfully sued a school superintendent in the past for defamation of character. He was widely known in the school community for being verbally aggressive with people with whom he was displeased, especially figures of authority.

Initially, I did not view the issue as difficult to resolve. I planned to talk to the coach about the concerns from parents and staff, discuss how we could improve the way he modelled quality in his coaching, brainstorm with him how we could remedy the situation, and move forward with the boys' basketball season. At the time, I did not realise what a troublesome situation I was about to get involved in and how the way I handled the situation would affect my leadership capacity in the days to come.

Mike arrived in my office in the accompaniment of a teaching colleague whom he identified as a close friend and union representative. His colleague, Len, began the conversation informing me of the high respect and regard the coach had both in the local community and in the state as an outstanding coach. Len further informed me the coach was a Hall of Fame coach who was, in his estimation, the "life blood" of the school. I listened without comment and, when it became my turn to speak, acknowledged the dedication the coach had shown through the years and that being inducted into the Hall of Fame was an impressive accomplishment. I informed Mike that a number of parents and staff had seen me personally or had talked to me on the phone stating their concern about his statements on the radio and I expected similar comments would not be made in the future. I discussed with Mike I shared the same concerns and he was expected to be more cognizant in the future not to make comments that could be construed as disrespectful about his players. There was an elongated moment of silence where Mike stared at me and then raised both of his arms up in the air with his palms facing me and declared that he did not have any idea of what I was referring to. I did not expect this response as it seemed evident to me he had made the statements the previous night on the radio.

Mike asked me how he could be more cognizant so as not to make similar remarks when he never made such remarks. He then informed me he felt he was being unfairly singled out because, "administrators are usually out to get him" (Research Journal Interview Notes 9/2/2006) and that he was offended I believed a malicious rumour. I considered the possibility of his claim of innocence to be true and said I would check the radio tape from the night before and listen to what he had said. He said that if I wanted to go to the radio station to listen to the tape I was welcome to. However, by doing so I was insinuating that he was lying, and he found this disrespectful. I saw no other way to resolve the issue than to go to the radio station and hear the record of the interview for myself. I informed him that I would go to the radio station after our discussion. I shared with him if he was not telling the truth then we had a more serious situation to deal with. He told me to go find out for myself the truth and that he would expect my apology when I discovered his innocence. I thanked him and his union representative for their time, packed up my backpack of work I had to complete that evening, and headed down to the local radio station, WKVR.

I met with the radio station owner and asked to listen to the Mike's interview. The owner, Tom, said he was happy to help me out and told me that Coach Mike was one of the best in the business, an important man in town, and there was nothing of interest on the tape. I thanked him for the opportunity to listen to the tape, and he guided me to a listening booth in the station, provided me headphones, and played the tape of Mike's interview. I was disappointed to find out that Mike had said word for word what staff and parents had reported he had said in the interview. I now had a more difficult situation to deal with as Mike had blatantly lied to me. I went home that night and slept uneasily as I felt that my interaction with Mike the next day at school was not going to be a comfortable one. Mike had lied to me, and I could not fathom why he had done so knowing I was going to the radio station to hear a tape of his interview.

When I came to work the next day, the athletic director of the school came to see me about an issue with Mike. He was upset. The situation suddenly became more troublesome and complex.

The athletic director shared with me a letter Mike had sent out to a regional referee who had overseen some of Mike's games. He had sent the letter directly to the man's house, and the letter was full of derogatory comments about the referee that were of both a professional and personal nature. The letter included such comments as, "You should be a little girl's referee", "You are an embarrassment to the game," and, "Do everyone a favour and stop working high school games." The reason the athletic director was sharing the letter with me was the coach's directly sending the letter of complaint to a referee was a violation of the athletic conference rules. According to the rules, if a coach has a disagreement or a concern with a referee, the coach is to inform the school's athletic director, who then handles the situation with the help of the principal, if necessary. Under no circumstances were coaches to communicate to referees directly concerning complaints after a game was complete. The athletic director further told me that Mike had been doing this for years and to date no one had addressed his misbehaviour. He wondered if I were going to address the issue or let it pass as usually everybody did. I assured him I would take the necessary action to remedy the situation.

I believed a two-game suspension would be the appropriate consequence for Mike. The rationale for my thinking was that making inappropriate comments about his student athletes and lying to me equated to one game of suspension. Sending an unauthorised letter to a referee that was inflammatory and disrespectful equated to a second game suspension. The athletic director agreed that this seemed a reasonable consequence, but he warned me that even though it was a fair consequence I might want to think twice about it. This surprised me as he earlier asked me if I were going to respond to the coach's misbehaviour because in the past no one else had. He explained to me that I would pay dearly if I made any decision unfavourable to the coach. He stated the coach had powerful allies in town and across the state in athletics and school administrations, and it could only turn out badly for me. He recommended I simply provide him a stern warning and not suspend him. I thanked him for his feedback and met with my administrative partner, the school vice-principal, Carrie. Carrie agreed with the athletic director that I should not provide a suspension because he would cause major problems for me and that he had "a lot of friends and powerful places." She advised me I would be making a big mistake if I suspended Mike. She said she knew the town culture well and the vast majority of people in town would not see Mike's mistakes as a big deal. Few people would be upset if I simply let him keep coaching without consequence and would be incensed if I suspended him. I let her know I appreciated her feedback. I rang the school superintendent, Mary, to let her know of the situation and my investigation of the matter and to ask for her support for my decision for suspending the coach a couple of games.

Mary listened to what I had to say and informed me as principal it was my decision. I informed her of my intent of creating a transformational understanding and modelling of quality that was life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing and that Mike's actions were clearly in opposition to this concept of quality. She cautioned me, however, that this decision would result in great anger from Mike and that she was sure he would do everything possible to usurp my power as principal in the local community and within the staff of the school. Nevertheless, she believed my decision was in harmony with the values and beliefs of our school district to be respectful of students and honest with colleagues and school officials and said I had her total support. In taking into account all the feedback I had received, I decided I would stick to the plan I had set to suspend the coach for two games. I had heard all the risks and felt that the only reason I would not be giving Mike a consequence would be out of fear of his somehow hurting my reputation and of angering his large cadre of followers. Not to address Mike's behaviour appropriately would be to violate my values and beliefs. His disrespect to the players on his team, the demeaning letter he sent to disparage a referee with whom he did not agree, and his blatant lying were unacceptable behaviours in the humanistic school culture I was focused on fostering.

The meeting with Mike did not go well. I laid out the facts, my decision to initiate a two-game suspension, and discussed how the behaviours Mike exhibited as a coach needed to improve. Mike outlined for me with great clarity his four-point "action plan": first, he was going to sue me for violation of his First Amendment rights. Second, he would ensure that I soon would no longer be in the principal position when he "was done with" me. Third, he would be informing the press of my actions. Lastly, his union representative informed me they would appeal my decision to the superintendent, and if need be, the board of education. After Mike and his union representative left my office, I thought to myself, *What have I gotten myself into?*

I was greeted by television news reporters from the all the major state television stations when I arrived at school the morning following Mike's suspension. The story was the lead in the nightly news on three of the four major networks in Potsdam's state. The story emerged in the state's highest selling newspapers and then was picked up by the Associated Press. The information travelled nationwide.

I received hate messages and threatening phone calls, and people called into the local radio station exclaiming I was what was wrong with public high school athletics and public education leadership in general in America. I was drowning in negative press, surrounded by a core group of angry and vocal community members, a divided staff (those who supported Mike and those who supported my decision to suspend him), and I was only in the initial phases of the action research process of improving the educational quality at Potsdam High School. My plan had been to seek a shared understanding of quality with Mike and work collaboratively with him to remedy the issues. Instead, I found myself isolated against a formidable tide of anger and hatred both within and beyond the school walls, and I had been the principal for less than a month! My action research project to improve educational quality had not begun the way I had imagined. It looked as if I might fail before I even had a chance to begin.

End of transcript

In Principal Barry's Office

Agent Wiley: "What I hear you saying, Principal Barry, is you thought you had a good plan and the right intentions with your idea of transforming the idea of quality into something better than the *status quo*, yet you failed."

I adjusted myself in the plush, wood-backed chair. The furniture was another example of Principal Barry's lack of respect for the *status quo*. Everyone knows a high school principal's office furniture for other people to sit in is supposed to be uncomfortable. My goodness, why would a high school principal want students coming to his office for discipline problems to have a comfortable seat?

Principal Barry: "What I am saying is that this critical incident was the cause of unexpected consequences that caused chaos within both the school and local community, a chaos that divided and categorised people as either "good" or "bad." Since I had been the new principal for three weeks before the incident happened, I was ignorant of some of the socio-political norms of being the Potsdam High School principal."

Principal Barry paused to give me a chance to talk. I stayed quiet. I always enjoy watching my adversaries share with me their Achilles' heel. As I hoped, he continued talking.

Principal Barry: "Mr Wiley, I value public education as a way to affirm, protect, and celebrate life as much as we can. There is an unspoken rule, an implied expectation, that my role as school principal is to affirm, protect, and celebrate the *status quo*, a *status quo* of prejudicial judgement to choose winners and losers within a culture that demands behavioural and intellectual submissiveness. I am to find meaning and purpose in my position as principal by challenging the *status quo* that impoverishes the life of a notable number young people and invite others to do the same. We—"

Agent Wiley: "Sorry to interrupt you. Can we slow down for a moment?"

Principal Barry: "Sure. How can I help?"

Agent Wiley: "To me, you are saying that for the *status quo*, what is good is what you challenge and influence other people to challenge. It is common sense the *status quo* exists because it works. You know, many good people sacrificed to create the *status quo* and make it work. That's why there is a *status quo*: to make sure things work."

Principal Barry: "I agree with you, Mr Wiley. The *status quo* does work. The problem is it most often works for those of privilege, luck, and/or wealth. Public schools in a democratic society have a responsibility to promote social justice, equality in opportunity, and deep care and concern for the holistic well-being of students. The *status quo* of educational quality in the state is to promote an elitist class system. The academic "royalty" gain admittance into high-level classes that prepare them for future success in university. Some of these classes allow students to start earning university credit while still in high school. The "knight" and "merchant" classes are primarily in courses that prepare them for university, yet infrequently are allowed access to university credit courses and other high-level courses. The "peasants" take courses that do not prepare them for future education, and they are impoverished both academically and socially. Student government and honour societies are almost certainly out of their reach. My intention is to deconstruct this class system and in the process challenge every student and teacher to achieve success by gaining the skills, talents, and knowledge necessary to be competent, happy, and highly functioning people. I want our school to a powerful and vibrant institution of humanitarianism, competency, and hope for a meaningful present and future."

Agent Wiley: "Interesting, a Robin Hood of education are you, Principal Barry?"

Principal Barry: "I don't see the fit. I did not fully comprehend how my challenging of the *status quo* of educational quality was a serious threat to some people's sense of purpose, meaning, and order. Because of that, I did not take the time to appreciate fully the effects of my decisions. Therefore, I could have appeared callous and uncaring toward the belief and value systems of other people in the school and local community. Now, I appreciate the importance of seeking to build a shared sense of understanding between everyone as to why we are challenging the *status quo* of education quality and how we are going to improve. When I heard people threatening to injure me because I suspended the coach, even receiving death threats and a visit from two police officers to let me know my safety may be at risk, it was a wake-up call as to the severity of the situation."

Agent Wiley: "Why stay then? There are plenty of other high schools in the state. Why put yourself at risk?

Principal Barry: "I made a commitment to be part of transforming this high school into a learning culture of dialogue, rapport building, and life-affirming rituals, a place of questioning, learning to be critical readers, effective writers, thinkers, and speakers. A place to learn how to use arithmetic and science to improve living and understanding, a place where students learn how to better forgive and challenge themselves and trust the strength of their character. I want all of us in the school community to question ourselves any time we act in opposition to our values and beliefs and seek to improve. I want to lead a school that acknowledges and reinforces the idea that escaping the anxiety of being self-reflective and meta-cognitive about our highly technological and materialistic Western way of life is detrimental to individual growth, survival of a democratic way of life, and, quite possibly, the survival of the planet. In essence, I see public school as a sacred place of learning, knowing, and developing."

I watched Principal Barry attentively. His body language, tonality, and general

demeanour led me to believe he passionately believed in what he was saying. Wow, scary stuff! How do people like this sneak through to become high school principals? I knew one thing: this man is not going to last long here. You can only challenge question the *status quo* of educational quality so far. The *status quo* will not allow a serious threat.

Agent Wiley: "Sacred space? Schools are institutions of training, not sacred spaces."

Principal Barry: "I believe it is misguided not to consider public schools sacred spaces of learning. It is a place that should invite mystery, embrace questions, contemplation, and adventure and encourage an attitude of intellectual and psychological curiosity and openness, a safe and comfortable place where authenticity permeates the environment. Schools should be places where life-affirming rituals are commonplace, and students dance, sing, and play instruments. Artisans create paintings, sculptures, and pottery. Poets and playwrights delight the community. Scientists, engineers, and inventors seek new ways to improve the world. Philosophers debate ethics and play with words while reminding others to seek meaning in the world and avoid folly. It is a place where the call to be a physician or healer can be heard. School—"

Agent Wiley: "You really believe in this romantic notion of public school? It seems unbecoming of a modern-day school leader in America. We cannot continue to be the mightiest military force in the world with the most material wealth if we do not train our young people to be skilled and tireless workers of the future. Your idea of public school will place in dire jeopardy the survival of our current capitalistic system, not to mention our reputation as the number one consumers in the world. I do not think we want school leaders in America whose mission it is to undermine the very things that make America number one in the world. We are the best because we are willing to spend more money creating, developing, and purchasing luxuries, technological breakthroughs, and the military than any other nation. Why do you think our lives are more comfortable than ever, our medical procedures less painful and successful, our elderly the best-looking in the world?"

I paused to see if Principal Barry wanted to interject. He did. I adjusted myself in the plush chair.

Principal Barry: "Mr Wiley, I do not believe my view is romantic; rather, I believe it is pragmatic and humanistic. Schools are also a sacred place because they empower young people to identify risks in their life, such as proactively identifying dangerous people, places, and things. School is a scared place because humans train there to learn how to identify what is good and bad for them in a notably safer environment than outside of the school walls. School is the place young citizens learn how to balance their individual needs with the needs of the community and other people. School is a place where young people learn that our day-to-day reality is what we make of it here on earth. Teachers, staff, and school leaders should be helping students internalise, though gradual steps, the awesome responsibility associated with this knowledge and the challenge of functioning happily, healthily, and successfully in life knowing this truth."

Agent Wiley: "Perhaps, the feeling they "ought to be" something different from themselves is a good thing. It is the voice of reason telling you that you are off-course. It is the voice of logic and reason that public education was created to strengthen, was it not? We created public schools to train our young teenagers to be ready for the workforce. "

Principal Barry's eyes widened and he shook his head disapprovingly back and forth.

Principal Barry: "With all due respect, Mr Wiley, that is myth. Mandatory public/private education for every child to the age of eighteen would have been considered science fiction in the 1700s. It would be as strange as saying to people today we are only mandating educating children to the first grade. Only students who showed academic promise would be offered further education. That was basically the way education as conceived of in Jeffersonian times."

Agent Wiley: "But that's not how most people think the purpose of education is in America."

Principal Barry: "Then most people have been deceived, and isn't it an important part of my job as school leader to lead a discussion with the school community as to the purpose and mission of public education? How else can we improve, evolve, and be able to separate myth from reality?"

Agent Wiley: "Why waste the time? We know the mission and purpose of public schools already. It hasn't changed and probably never will. It comes down to training young people to be compliant citizens, good workers and consumers, law-abiding family and community members, and support charities and the local and larger American community. I do agree that education is more than learning facts. It is also about using the facts to make yourself useful in promoting capitalism and to have a job that pays for your survival and recreation."

Principal Barry: "I hear you, Mr Wiley, and I hope we can find some areas of agreement as we work together on one of my action research projects."

Agent Wiley: "Work together?"

Principal Barry: "Yes, I have a team of three other critical friends, and your addition to the team would be invaluable. Your knowledge, questioning, and perspective will help me be a better leader and understand in more depth the ways you think and consider the world as it relate to educational quality."

Transcriber Note: We recorded a change in Agent Wiley's brain activity. The principal seeking his help was reaching him emotionally rather than arguing his point against him. He was not used to an invitation to join a team because he was wanted. He was usually asked to join a team because he was able to manipulate situations. Though this was only a passing moment, I felt it important it was noted for the record. If we are to maintain the *status quo* of educational quality, we must not even have a moment of empathy for our opposition. It is inviting trouble. Agent Wiley acted admirably in dismissing the emotional response, and I know he will work on his ability to be objective in future cases.

Agent Wiley: "Thank you for the interesting conversation, Principal Barry. I am afraid I may be away on business for some time. I may be able to check in now and again to see how the project is doing."

I shook his hand with vigour this time around. I could not help to smile as I walked out of his office and into the school hallway. Foolish man. I do not do honesty.

Three Months Later

I ordered my usual at the café, and Kathy, the head server, brought me a hot cup of eye-opening coffee. She handed me a printout of an article with a colour photo of Principal Barry in a baseball uniform as coach of the team.

"Check this out, Mr Wiley. I saw this on a blog while I was on the Internet. It really tells the truth about this Principal Barry character." Kathy slightly nodded her head and raised her eyebrows, letting me know she wanted me to read it now. I honoured her request and read the paper before me.

Transcriber Note: I certify the following is an authentic copy of the article from the blog.

Post-Imus Reign of Political Correctness Terror Targets High School Baseball Coach

Heads will roll in the aftermath of Don Imus' trip to the guillotine for calling some basketball players "nappy headed hos." One example is Tim Tignoe, formerly the baseball coach for Potsdam High School. In an attempt to motivate his players after a particularly lame practice session, Tignoe singled out certain players, even comparing the play of one of them to that of girls and—brace yourself—using a homosexual slur.

As with Imus, he was first told he was suspended, then that he was fired, though Principal Bill Barry claims Tignoe actually "decided to resign."

His resignation is reminiscent of the suicides of party officials under Stalin—the kind where someone falls out of Uncle Joe's favour and gets so broken up about it as to empty a revolver into his own head. Tignoe puts it frankly: "I was forced to resign. I did not quit."

He's not the only one who isn't happy about it. Betty Lomax, a parent of one of the players, says of the team: "Their loyalty is and probably always will be to Tim. He has done nothing but good for these kids."

Says Don Moore, a senior and fan of the team, "The situation is pretty bad right now. A lot of us think it's pretty messed up that the school just threw [Tignoe] out and didn't give him another chance."

The situation is bad, all right, and steadily getting worse. Freedom of speech isn't guaranteed by our Constitution so much as by our national character, which has been so severely eroded that we now have to live in terror of accidentally offending politically privileged groups like blacks and homosexuals.

As for Potsdam High's baseball team, it has a new interim coach, who we can be confident will never offend any homosexuals—or win many ballgames. Barry himself has taken over the team.

My influence as a *status quo* agent had gone viral, and it was not a matter if I would succeed in driving Principal Barry out. It was just a matter of time.

Agent Wiley: "Kathy, can I have this copy?"

Kathy smiled approvingly. "Absolutely, Mr Wiley."

I placed down two badly worn five-dollar bills with the grease-smeared check, thanked the cook, Mr Dahmer, for a wonderful breakfast, and headed to my scheduled meeting with Principal Barry to talk about his progress in his action research. From what I had just read, he seemed a man of living contradiction and was failing as I had planned and expected.

In Principal Barry's office

"Nice to see you today, Mr Wiley!"

Principal Barry offered his right hand enthusiastically for a handshake. I shook his hand in a perfunctory manner.

"Thank you. I believe you asked for my help in providing you feedback about your action research projects some time ago. Correct?"

Principal Barry: "Yes. Please sit down. Feel free to have a bottle of water or a snack over there on the table behind you. I am really excited to have you on the action research team!"

Water and snacks in a principal's office. This man truly did not understand what being a high school principal was supposed to act like.

Agent Wiley: "Happy to help you be a better leader. What's the plan?"

Principal Barry took a seat next to me at the table. Interesting, he did not sit across from me from his large office desk like high school principals usually do and are expected to. This man simply has no regards for the *status quo*!

Principal Barry: "Mr Wiley, I am not conducting action research with romantic curiosity about school leadership and student and teacher development; rather, I consider the research a quest to improve myself fundamentally as a life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing quality school leader. I want to influence the transformational learning of other people and in doing so improve the social and academic milieu of the school culture. Admittedly, it does not look plausible to do this at first glance. We have high rates of student failure and dropouts, student alcohol and drug abuse, and a student body with an unusually high number of students designated as special education. The local community has a low level of education achievement, and poverty is a serious issue. Many of the most influential local officials and politicians act bullish and do not support the financial needs of the school, and our town budget resists supporting education innovation and improvement. Nevertheless, I believe when we understand and model quality in a transformational way it will result in vastly improved and vibrant Potsdam High School."

Agent Wiley: "How can quality make a difference in changing the *status quo*? I like to think of quality as a concept that supports the *status quo*."

Transcriber Note: Agent Wiley did an outstanding job by asking this question. We had to figure out why Principal Barry would attempt to use one of our favourite concepts in his plan to overthrow our work. Quality is what makes the materialistic and elitist *status quo* of American public education work. The idea he will be able to recreate the meaning of the word is foolish to us. Quality will always reflect a *status quo* of "have and have-nots." If there were none, then what use would the concept of quality be? The purpose of quality is to know who has it and who does not so we can separate the successful people from the rest. He could, however, influence people to question some elements of the *status quo*. This cannot be allowed.

Principal Barry stood up and removed his tweed jacket with leather patches on the elbows. He gently placed the jacket on the back of his chair. His wearing of a blue button-down shirt and no tie was a slap in the face of the *status quo* that I found offensive. I had to take a deep breath not to comment.

Principal Barry: I see a new understanding of educational quality as an essential tool to be able to eliminate the "museum effect" that impoverishes the education of public school students."

I felt my eyebrows rise. "Museum effect? What are you talking about?"

Principal Barry smiled. "I am glad you asked! There is a phenomenon called the "museum effect" where the mere inclusion of an object within in a museum generates its importance and cultural validity. The same could be said for public schools." Barry paused, as if gathering his thoughts before continuing. "The inclusion of mandatory curriculum requirements within the school system generates its own importance and cultural validity. It's a strange and potentially harmful phenomenon. I am a critical theorist, Mr Wiley. I believe in the questioning of the *status quo* on a regular basis to assess if it is meeting people's needs. I am constantly assessing the *status quo* and looking for ways to improve its service in enhancing people's experience of authenticity, camaraderie, happiness, and sense of awe and respect for life. In plain terms, I look to make sure the *status quo* is responsible for reducing pain and suffering in life and promoting social justice, meaning, care, hope, and competency."

Agent Wiley: "Principal Barry, do you think it's possible people do not like your messing with the *status quo* and how educational quality is understood and modelled? Perhaps, they are upset because the very purpose of school is to inculcate the *status quo* into young people for the purpose of offering them security. Who gave you the right to violate "museum" rules? It is wholly unacceptable to question the mandated teaching and learning established by knowledge experts who are certified by the state and by local school authorities. Your job as a school principal is not to question. It is to obey the state and local predetermined academic standards and make sure everyone else in the school does as well. I mean no disrespect; it simply seems to be you are, perhaps, overstepping your bounds."

> **Principal Barry:** "I disagree, Mr Wiley. I believe one of my most important responsibilities as a school leader is to promote intrinsic motivation and not external motivation as the reason for learning, knowing, and taking action in life. Perhaps, the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1998) and his theory of "flow" will help you better understand my intention. He wrote of an exhilarating feeling of optimal experience he called "flow." He defined optimal experience specifically with "we have all experienced times when, instead of being buffeted by anonymous forces, we do feel in control of our actions, masters of our own fate. On the rare occasions that it happens, we feel a sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished and that becomes a landmark in memory for what life should be like" (*p.* 3).

Transcriber Note: Principal Barry waxed on about Csikszentmihalyi and analogues of his work and his work at length. Agent Wiley was ignorant of the information the principal shared. He asked me to send an executive summary of the information. Since this information was not in our database (outside of the *status quo*), I used information from Principal Barry's journals to send the information. The following comes from Barry's journals regarding the information shared. I will use this for the archives for the sake of being succinct.

Executive summary regarding information regarding "flow" and its analogues from Barry's journals for Agent Wiley to use to detract Principal Barry from his misguided goal of transforming the meaning of educational quality:

Barry's Journal, PDF Copy

Csikszentmihalyi (1998) stated, "I developed a theory of optimal experience based on the concept of *flow*-the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it" (p. 4). Csikszentmihalyi (1998) adds that flow is a process of achieving happiness. He admonishes the reader that this happiness is not a happiness of hedonism. It is happiness:

…through control of one's inner life. We shall begin by considering how consciousness works and how it is controlled, because only if we understand the way subjective states are shaped can we master them. Everything we experience-joy or pain, interest or boredom-is represented in the mind as information. If we are able to control this information, we can decide what our lives will be like. (p.6).

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) created "flow theory" after thousands of interviews with people from a plethora of occupations and lifestyles. He described his data collection technique as the following:

In the beginning our data consisted of interviews and questionnaires. To achieve greater precision we developed with time a new method for measuring the quality of subjective experience. This technique, called the Experience Sampling Method, involves asking people to wear an electronic paging device for a week and to write down how they feel and what they are thinking about whenever the pager signals. The pager is activated by a radio transmitter about eight times each day, at random intervals.), each respondent provides what amounts to a running record, a written film clip of his or her life, made up of selections from its representative moments. By now, over a hundred thousand such cross sections of experience have been collected from different parts of the world. The conclusions of this volume are based on that body of data (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p.4).

Toms and Toms (1998) claimed:

the extent to which you can be one with your work is the extent to which you will do it with excellence. In sports this is called "being in the zone." When you're able to work in a fully integrated way, with your actions, words,

thoughts, and feelings in alignment, and following your intention, then your

work is obviously compelling. (p. 124).

From sports to reading, every human activity seems to be a context where one can "be in the zone." In this zone there seems to be an affiliated emotional feeling of joy, happiness, and contentment.

One of the prime conditions of flow is the state of mind of the people who are in it. They describe an experience where consciousness is harmoniously ordered. Additionally, the experience is often autotelic, pursued for its own sake. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) quotes J. S. Mill as a means to illustrate how a mental concept such as flow can empirically affect the lives of people: "No great improvements in the lot of mankind are possible, until a great change takes place in the fundamental constitution of their modes of thought… Whether we are happy depends on inner harmony, not on the controls we are able to exert over the great forces of the universe" (p.9). When it comes to understanding quality, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) provided an illuminating clue. "Each of us has a picture, however vague, of what we would like to accomplish before we die. How close we get to attaining this goal becomes the measure for the quality of our lives" (p.9). He spoke of those people who are able to increase the quality of their lives regardless of the material conditions as having possibly one key attribute: they have control over their thinking, behaviour, and decisions. If quality is harmonious to Csikszentmihalyi's understanding of happiness, then it is plausible that few people regularly and consistently experience quality. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) stated:

Genuinely happy individuals are few and far between. How many people do you

know who enjoy what they are doing, who is reasonably satisfied with their lot,

who do not regret the past and look to the future with genuine confidence? If

Diogenes with his lamp twenty-three centuries ago had difficulty finding an

honest man, today he would have perhaps an even more troublesome time

finding a happy one. (p.11)

In differentiating "flow" from Maslow's conception of peak experience, Jackson

and Csikszentmihalyi (1999) note:

As originally coined by the psychologist Abraham Maslow, peak experience

refers to moments of highest happiness that may or may not be of our own

doing. These may also have the characteristics of flow, but flow is not reserved

only for these extraordinary moments. Flow can occur during simple activities,

like playing throw-and-catch with a friend. This is probably not a defining event

in anyone's life, but it can be an enjoyable experience, lifting the spirits

momentarily. (p.11-12)

It seems quality has something to do with control over the content of our

consciousness and the ability to understand what is and is not important to help a person

meet their needs in a positive way. A question I considered in my school leadership was

what must change about the perceptions and understandings of beneficiaries and

stakeholders of American public education to optimise and improve experiences and

performances of quality. The key to changing perceptions and understanding for

improvement according to Csikszentmihalyi (1998) is to change one's direction from

external forces and rewards to internal forces and intrinsic rewards. This change of

attitude is the key to happiness, according to renowned American psychiatrist William

Glasser (1998), as discussed in chapter two, who proposed that all human beings have

the same five basic quality needs: love, power, fun, freedom, and survival. It is through

authentically fulfilling the needs that one can be happy and experience quality (Carse,

1994).

Csikszentmihalyi (1991) pondered why people often do not make significant progress in controlling their consciousness:

But if it is true that people have known for thousands of years what it takes to become free and in control of one's life, why haven't we made more progress in this direction? Why are we as helpless, or more so, than our ancestors were in facing the chaos that interferes with happiness? There are at least two good explanations for this failure. In the first place, the kind of knowledge—or wisdom—one needs for emancipating consciousness is not cumulative. It cannot be condensed into a formula; it cannot be memorized and then routinely applied. (p.21)

Csikszentmihalyi's statement resonates deeply with me, proposing that the key to happiness and flow is a control that is not simply a cognitive skill. "At least as much as intelligence, it requires the commitment of emotions and will. It is not enough to know how to do it; one must do it, consistently, in the same way as athletes or musicians who must keep practicing what they know in theory. And this is never easy" (Csikszentmihalyi 1998, p.21).

Csikszentmihalyi (1988) explained:

Given the recurring need to return to this central question of how to achieve mastery of one's life, what does the present state of knowledge say about it? How can it help a person learn to rid himself of anxieties and fears and thus become free of the controls of society, whose rewards he can now take or leave? As suggested before, the way is through control over consciousness, which in turn leads to control over the quality of experience (p. 22).

The idea that the concept of flow and quality may have an inextricable relationship led me to examine the idea of whether we are all connected in some way through

experiences of quality. This led me to the concept of field theory, the belief we are all inextricably connected, and that intentionality toward other people has a real effect on the lives of other people.

Field Theory as Recorded in Principal Barry's Journal No. 9-PDF Copy

Field theory proposes that space is never empty; between all people, things, and thoughts there exists an intimate relationship. This relationship is based on "energy fields" and is described in detail by Sheldrake (1981) and his contemporaries in humanities based on science philosophy in their construction of field theory. Sheldrake (1981) refers to fields as "invisible, intangible, inaudible, tasteless and odorless" (72). These fields operate within the ontological perspective of quantum field theory. Quantum field theory views "space" as not being empty (Bohm, 1984; Bohm and Nicol, 2003; Capra, 2010, 1996, Combs, 2009, 2002; Grof, 1993, 1988; McTaggart, 2008a, 2008b; Redfield, Murphy, Timbers, 2002; Wade, 1996; Watson, Batchelor, Claxton, 2000; Wheatley, 1999; Wilber, 2001a, 2001b, 2001d, 1998a; Zukav, 2000, 2001). Voids are a myth, and in every space are fields that are invisible to our five senses. In these fields are believed to be the primary source of the universe. Wheatley aptly states, "Fields are conceived in many different ways, depending on theory" (1999, p.49). However, Wheatley recognized that, although fields are conceived in different ways, all the different modes of thought agree that fields are invisible entities that occupy every grain of space. People cannot see fields but they sense them through their effects (Coles, 1990; Combs, 2009, 2002 Krishnamurti, 1995, 1971; Leonard 1995, 1987, 1978; McTaggart, 2011; Sheldrake, 1981; Wheatley, 1999; Zukav, 2001).

Zohar and Marshall (1999) define quantum field theory as describing:

"…all existing things as being states or patterns of dynamic, oscillating energy. You and I, the chairs on which we sit, the food we eat are all patterns of this energy. And what

does this energy oscillate on? … a still "ocean" or background state of unexcited energy called the quantum vacuum. (p.160)

Feeling and recognizing these effects is seemingly subtle; therefore, great awareness is requisite to experience and understand fields (Bache, 2008; Combs, 2009, 2002; Wilber, 2007). In a field theory world, all beings and the things they interact with are connected through fields, sometimes strongly. Sometimes they are barely detectable. Regardless of the strength of connection, all things are interconnected to a degree. Teachers, students, school leaders, and people in the school and local community are immersed in co-creating fields in their daily interaction with each other. This means that quality has something to do with these fields and that to understand and model quality without a field theory orientation is to misunderstand and impoverish its potential meaning as a life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing experience.

William James' (1969) construct of radical empiricism stated that all things real are directly experienced. James posits that radical empiricism consists first of a postulate, next of a statement of fact, and finally of a generalised conclusion. James (1969) elaborated on this process:

> The postulate is that the only things that shall be debatable among philosophers shall be things definable in terms drawn from experience. The statement of fact is that the relations between things, conjunctive as well as disjunctive, are just as much matters of direct particular experience, neither more so nor less so, than the things themselves. The generalised conclusion is that therefore the parts of experience hold together from next to next by relations that are themselves part of the experience. The directly apprehended universe, in short, no extraneous trans-empirical connective support, but possess in its own right a concatenated or continuous structure. (p.199)

Abraham Maslow's landmark book, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1968), dedicates an

entire chapter on his research and ruminations concerning "Peak-Experiences as Acute

Identity Experiences" (p. 103). Maslow begins the chapter by challenging the reader:

> As we seek for definitions or identity, we must remember that these definitions
>
> and concepts do not now exist in some hidden place, waiting patiently for us to
>
> find them. Only partly do we discover them; partly we create them. Partly
>
> identity is whatever we say it is. Prior to this of course should come our
>
> sensitivity and receptivity to the various meanings the word already has. (1968,
>
> p.103)

If Maslow is correct in his assumption that people in peak-experiences are most like

their identities and closest to their real selves, then in essence people are our peak-

experiences. People reacquaint themselves to themselves through peak-experiences.

This concept fit nowhere in my paradigm and shattered it immediately. Since that

moment on, I was unable to see my identity the same way again.

I was heavily influenced by Maslow's understanding of identity. I remember

immediately writing next to this sentence "Beautiful!":

> I shall be describing in a holistic way, not by splitting identity apart into quite
>
> separate components which are mutually exclusive, but rather by turning it over
>
> and over in my hands and gazing at its different facets, or as a connoisseur
>
> contemplates a fine painting, seeing it now in this organization (as a whole),
>
> now in that. Each "aspect" discussed can be considered a partial explanation of
>
> each of the other "aspects." (1968, p.104)

The more I meditated on the question of my identity, the more I came to the same

realization as Fred J. Hanna in his account of exploring the various depths of conscious.

Hanna stated, "One of the insights that regularly manifested during mediation was the

realization that I, as a manifestation of pure being and pure consciousness, was not limited to any particular identity or viewpoint or belief. In fact, I came to understand that I, as consciousness, was in fact a source of identities and viewpoints" (qtd. in Hart, Nelson and Puhakka 2000, p. 118).

Peter L. Nelson's mystical experience described in "Mystical Experience and Radical Deconstruction: Through the Ontological Looking Glass," is akin to the kind of experience I had when the paradigm of my old sense of identity collapsed and reappeared anew because of my new learning. Nelson stated:

> There was no longer a "me," but somehow total awareness was still there, but it was not really clear exactly who was having this awareness. I was conscious but did not exist in the usual sense that I had always understood as being in the world. I and everything were one. I do not now know how long I remained in this state-it might only have been minutes, but it could have been hours. There was no reference point for time, so, effectively, it did not exist. However long I remained in that blissful light does not matter. Having arrived there and being there was all that mattered, but that was not a thought at the time. Later, when first attempting a post hoc interpretation of this episode, I came to identify my experience as a direct merger with the void-the "ultimate ground of being." No matter how one interprets this encounter of my merger into the light, what remains with me to this day is a wordless and core knowing of who I am beyond role or form-a transcendent sense of "identity." (Hart, Nelson, and Puhakka, 2000, p.61)

Hart stated:

> "… inspiration as a specific epistemic event, an activity of knowing. It has a

distinct difference from the kind of knowing characteristic of the typical normal

waking state, which a constant internal dialogue dominates. In the normal

waking state awareness is subservient to analysis, the possibility of full

participation in the event is thwarted by the expectation of evaluation of it, and

deep contact is prohibited by chronic categorizing of the other. This style of

knowing is skewed by the acceptance of subject-object dichotomies and the

objectivism that rationalizes this into place." (Hart, Nelson, and Puhakka, 2000,

p.31)

Hart provides a personal example to illustrate an experience of inspiration. An

interesting coincidence is that I have had a similar experience and categorised it in my

personal journal as a quality experience as a university instructor of graduate education

students. Hart related the following story:

I remember some years ago in teaching an undergraduate college class. I was a

graduate student at the time and this was my first teaching responsibility. I was

speaking about some idea mentioned in our text and then I began to say things

that did not seem to come from my "normal self." The words seemed riveting,

wise, and profound beyond my conscious understanding of the material. They

seemed to move all of us very deeply. I was not even sure exactly what I had

said, but the enraptured students and comments of appreciation afterward

seemed to confirm that this was a potent event. The class, myself included,

seemed to be transported into a space that felt more fine-tuned, more loving,

and more connected with the best of us and with each other. I suddenly and

truly loved them and could feel the tissue that connected us. I have to say that it

did not feel like "me" that was speaking, but maybe the best part of me and this

part felt like it had assistance in some way, or rather, like I was assisting the

event" (Hart, Nelson, and Puhakka, p. 33-34).

It is an unusual feeling one gets when reading or hearing of an experience someone else has that is almost, if not, identical to one's own. Interestingly, I categorize my experience as quality, while Hart categorises it as inspiration.

These experiences are difficult to understand through a purely phenomenological perspective. This is why the action research I designed uses a multiplicity of methodological approaches to maximize the potential for improving my understanding of quality's meaning in educational experience. Bachelard (1994) relates the difficulty in approaching experiences such as Hart's inspiration and my search for quality from the singular approach of phenomenology: "For a phenomenologist, the attempt to attribute antecedents to an image, when we are in the very existence of the image, is a sign of inveterate psychologism" (Bachelard, 1994, xxix). What is necessary is to approach the experience with our full being.

Hart relates another experience of inspiration that sounds much like an experience I categorised as a quality experience while living in the Alaskan wilderness as a park ranger assistant. Taking a drive in the Great Lakes region of America, Hart had an unusual experience.

> I suddenly took notice of the huge cumulus clouds set against a brilliant blue sky; in that moment, I was transported and transfigured-full and free like the clouds, vibrant like the sky; joy, power, and peace all at once… chest burning… no words, just being and knowing. I felt like my awareness opened into a directness and immediacy, without linguistic preconception or the need for immediate interpretation. This way of being is easily overwhelmed by the rhythms of a busy, responsible, adult day. In this case, a break from typical responsibilities and the trigger of a beautiful vista seemed to set the stage for

this unexpected opening. Along with such opening, a sense of awe, relief, and gratitude emerge. (Hart 2001, p.36).

Hart's research about the meaning of inspiration further confirmed a pattern of inter-subjective understanding.

"In the words of one person: "Everything in my body just opened up." And when such opening does occur, it often comes with a simultaneous sense of being filled or flowed though. One man described an inspiration while helping others: "It felt like I was being raised into a waterfall that gushes over and through me, and the drops that linger awaken a dormant part of me that is not separate from the waterfall or from those I am helping." Ancient Athenian philosopher Philo offered a similar sense of the event: "I have approaching my work empty and suddenly become full, the ideas falling from a shower from above and being sown invisibly" (cited in Heschel, 1962, p.333). A writer reported to me: "When my writing is inspired it's like automatic writing; it's almost like taking dictation." Likewise, Puccini wrote: "The music in this opera was dictated to me from God: I was merely instrumental in putting it on paper and communicating it to the public" (Abell, 1964, pp. 156-157). Again, the root meaning of the word inspire (to be filled or infused) expresses this dimension precisely. When the connection is intense enough, the container or the self, seems to disappear and "being filled" or "flowed through" is then experienced as a fullness and awakening without a sense of being a separate container" (Hart, 2001, p.36).

Are these terms I have written about, flow, inspiration, egolessness, and peak experiences, simply synonymous with the meaning of quality and therefore interchangeable? If not, what is the essential difference? What are these concepts' relationships to quality?

Transcriber: End of PDF from Principal Barry's Journals

Agent Wiley: "What do field theory, flow, and the other things you speak of have to do with educational quality as it relates to student thought and intelligence? Students come to public school to learn basic skills, earn good grades, and pass required tests to attain the level of quality needed to graduate and earn a diploma and for future schooling and/or employment."

Principal Barry: "Primarily the insightful and creative thinking of theoretical physicist David Bohm (1994, 1984) guides my understanding of thought. I used to imagine thought was simply thinking; however, thinking and thought are not the same. Thinking is experience recorded in the brain, and this record becomes thought. Thinking is more alive to the present, thought the past. It seems I act mostly from my thoughts because when I have an experience I most often search my thoughts for the appropriate response both cognitively and physically (Bohm, 1994; Bohm and Nicol, 2003). This framework of thought explains that the reason for disorder, chaos, and incoherence in my world and the world at large is incoherent thought. Thought is what I primarily act upon, often naïve to the fact that what I am acting on is not necessary real; it is a representation of things I believed real. Thoughts can act as a barrier to understanding due to the deception that thoughts are real and not a representation. As an action researcher and school principal it is, therefore, necessary that I do not automatically accept things as they seem to be. Bohm (1994) states, 'If we accept 'what seems to be' as 'what is,' then we can't inquire' (p.16).

"Bohm viewed thought as a system. As a system, thought is in an unavoidable process of change, evolution, and development. Bohm believed a person or a collective of people must be aware of what thought is 'up to' and to be on constant watch for incoherent faults in thought structure. Doing so optimises people's ability to use thinking and awareness to overcome the incoherence of the thought system with a coherent structure of thought. Bohm urges us to become aware of assumptions of out thought systems that we are not aware we have and regularly question our assumptions. Most importantly, Bohm urges people to be aware of how assumptions limit our abilities and understanding of the world, other people, and ourselves. When I think about the meaning of quality, I make sure to be aware about my operating thought system about quality to check for coherence both interpersonally and interpersonally. When there is dissonance between my thinking and thoughts, which includes my values, I look for ways to improve the coherence of my thinking and thought system about understanding and modelling quality in my practice as a school leader. The action research in which I am involved seeks to find improved ways to think about, and have thoughts about, quality in a life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing way."

Agent Wiley: "Seems like trying to argue how many angels can fit on the tip of a pin: much to do about nothing. I do not see how it makes a difference anyways if we think of thinking and thought in different ways. Let us move on to something more pragmatic. What does intelligence mean to you? This is our business in education. Improving intelligence, reading, writing, and arithmetic: there are what intelligence is about in public education, agreed?"

Principal Barry: "I see the difference between thinking and thought as critical for an educator and school leader to understand, and I hope intelligence is more than that, Mr Wiley. I accept the multiple intelligence view of Howard Gardner (2000, 1993) as my basis for understanding human intelligence. His construct of multiple intelligence guides my thinking, behaviour, and decisions as an educational leader about the meaning of intelligence to ensure all the multiple intelligence of a students are being addressed and strengthened though classroom pedagogy (Gardner, 1991).

Gardner's (1985) brain research demonstrated intelligence as multilocal in the brain and transcending brain function. He postulated, based on exhaustive brain studies and comprehensive interviews, that human beings have multiple intelligences. He identified eight-and-a-half such intelligences and believes there is plausibly more intelligence to be explored and identified. The identified intelligence is the following.

Principal Barry handed me a laminated piece of paper that he kept pinned to the bulletin board behind his desk that outlined the multiple intelligences.

Visual/Spatial: "This intelligence might be referred to as the mind's eye—the lens that sees through visual metaphors and memory imprints" (Fogarty and Stoehr, 2008, p.7).

Logical/Mathematical: Includes and encompasses the complete range of reasoning skills.

Verbal/Linguistic: "The power of the word, in its myriad forms, is truly at the heart of this intelligence. Reading, writing, and other forms of communication, such as sign language, also resides under this umbrella" (Fogarty and Stoehr, 2008, p.11).

Musical Intelligence: The power of music and rhythm in knowing and the ability to successfully express this knowledge in an intersubjectively valid manner.

Bodily-Kinaesthetic: "Action is the key to this intelligence. The body is the conduit for the mind, and muscle memory obtained from experiences is what defines the bodily/kinaesthetic intelligence" (Fogarty and Stoehr, 2008, p.14).

Interpersonal: Concerned with our ability to understand each other in understanding and motivation, as well as the ability to coherently empathize with others and their feelings.

Intrapersonal: "Pragmatically, the interpersonal intelligence represents a frame of mind in which learners internalize learning through thoughtful connections and then transmit it to novel situations through reflective application" (Fogarty and Stoehr, 2008, p.18). This mode of intelligence aids one in understanding themselves in a coherent and fruitful manner.

Naturalistic: This intelligence enables one to see and understand the underlying structure and wholeness of nature and human relationship to it.

Existential: People skilled and insightful about the questions of the meaning of life and able to deal effectively with the anxiety of death. The ability to see reality is multifaceted and dependent on the orientation of the observer.

Agent Wiley: "I can accept the understanding of intelligence you outlined; however, all that really matters in school is the logical/mathematical, verbal/linguistic, visual/spatial, and bodily-kinaesthetic. The rest are luxuries and perhaps are interesting, but they should be left to parents and students to deal with and not on the backs of taxpayer dollars."

Principal Barry: "I disagree, Mr Wiley. My values and beliefs as a humanistic educator and educational leader lead me to believe there is high value in all the intelligences. I was inspired to embrace all people's multiple intelligences by Margaret Wheatley's (1999) book, *Leadership and the New Science*, which revealed an emerging paradigm for management that is participatory, inclusive, and dynamic. Wheatley postulated a leadership/management paradigm where information is free-flowing, the climate is playful and participatory, and every member of a group is critical to success. She proposed the following metaphors are apt to describe the leaders of this paradigm: 'gardeners, midwives, stewards, servants, missionaries, facilitators, convene' (p.165). In this new science of leadership, the self is realized to be inherently drawn to others. "Self includes awareness of those others it must relate to as part of its system. Even among simple cells, there is an uttering recognition that they are in a system; there is a profound relationship between individual activity and the whole" (1999, p.167). I like the metaphor of the gardener. It is most like how I saw my role as a school principal and how I perceived teachers and sport coaches. I liked the metaphor the most because it reaffirmed the life-affirming nature of public education and the respect educators must have for all of a human being's multiple intelligences. It is disrespectful to the humanity of students and teachers, and any person, to deny the importance of any of the multiple intelligences with which people are endowed."

Agent Wiley: "I thank you, Principal Barry, for letting me know in more depth your influences and biases. I will be interested to see and hear how your action project pans out. I hope, for your sake, you have not bitten off more than you can chew. Because of some personal matters I need to attend to I will not be able to join your research team as a critical friend at this time. I will be out of the state for two years. How about when you finish the action research project we sit down again and have a discussion?"

Principal Barry: "Fair enough, and how about you serve as part of a validation group when the project is complete to provide me information about your perspective of the validity of the findings I proposed to have influenced and/or accomplished?"

Agent Wiley: "It is a deal."

I put my hand out for a handshake, which Principal Barry enthusiastically shook three times.

Principal Barry: "I will see you in two years' time."

Agent Wiley: "Yes, I should be back in Potsdam by then. Be careful, Principal Barry. The *status quo* may be stronger than you understand or can comprehend."

Principal Barry smile warmly. "Perhaps, you underestimate the passion of my values and beliefs?"

Agent Wiley: "No, I question why you would bother to take up a task worthy of Sisyphus when it will do little to promote your career. My recommendations: go with the flow, make some small improvements here and there, and then move up to a higher-level position for more money and prestige. After all, that is the American way!"

Principal Barry: "We shall see two years from now. Best of luck to you, Mr Wiley."

Agent Wiley: "I appreciate the sentiment. However, it seems you are the one most needing the luck. Good-bye for now."

I walked out of Principal Barry's office with a smirk on my face he could not see. Principal Barry's idealism was on a collision course with the *status quo* of educational quality, and I was sure he would not survive professionally.

Transcriber Note: The archive record at this time was paused until Principal Barry conducted his action research project. The archive will report after the action research project if

Agent Wiley completed his mission of reinforcing the *status quo* of educational quality and upending the foolish notion Principal Barry had of introducing a successful challenge to the *status quo* by introducing a transformational understanding and model for understanding the meaning of quality.

CHAPTER FOUR

Challenging the *Status quo*:

The Introduction of Transformational Quality Theory (TQT)

Introduction: Background and Purpose

As discussed in earlier chapters, I am a critical theorist. This means I embrace a humanistically healthy balance between intellectualism and social change (McLaren, 1989; McLaren and Kincheloe, 2007; Shor, 1992). I define intellect as referring to developing the skills and habits of being an effective thinker and problem solver and having skills and knowledge relevant to the culture within which one lives (Gardner, 2000, 1999, 1993, 1991). I define social change as referring to change that leads our society toward a more purely democratic, fair, just, imaginative, creative, caring, and humanistic way of being (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 1988; Dewey, 1938/1997; Frankl, 2000, 1984; Hart, 2001; Kohl, 2004, 1998, 1994; Kohn, 1999, 1986; Kozol, 1991, Noddings, 1995, 1984; Sergiovanni, 1992). The challenge of introducing progressive reform into the American public high school system is a formidable task. It is an institution often fraught with mistrust, power struggles, a rigid system of haves and have-nots, and a fanatical embrace of behaviourist and statistical techniques to address learning and discipline (Holt, 1995; Leonard, 1991, 1987, 1978; Postman, 1969; Sizer, 1992; Spring, 1991). I believe in order to influence a school successfully regarding quality and hope, I need clarity concerning the meaning of educational quality. Establishing this clarity would facilitate confidence that I was leading the school in the right direction.

As an educator and school leader, I vowed to "walk the talk" of being a critical theorist and take action to convert school from a "place of information" into a "place of

transformation" (Freire, 1985, 1970a, 1970b; Hart, 2001; Leithwood and Jantzi, 1990). I aimed to create a constructivist learning (Brooks and Brooks, 2003) culture focused on democratic principles. Therefore, I sought to establish a shared agreement about the meanings and dispositions of quality and establish social norms to support the agreement (Habermas, 1984; McCarthy, 1984; Rorty, 1999).

Living Theory

Whitehead and Huxtable explained living theory education research as the:

…inclusion of energy-flowing values in the explanatory principles individuals use to explain their educational influences in their own living, in the learning of others in the learning of the social formations in which they live and work. The process of clarifying the meanings of energy-flowing values as these emerge through practice includes action reflection cycles in which individuals express their concerns when their values are not being lived as fully as they wish; their imaginations generate possibilities for living their values more fully, the chose an action plan and act on it, gathering data to make a judgement on their effectiveness, they evaluate their influence in relation to their values, skills and understandings, they modify their concerns, imagined possibilities and actions in the light of their evaluations. (2010, p.9-10)

A living theory research approach, as previously discussed in chapters 1 and 2, demonstrates profound respect for the educational researcher as an agent of educational change and improvement (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009; Kincheloe, 1991). It is research influenced by, but not beholden to, the authority of reported experts and intellectuals and the literature of the past (Moustakas, 1956). I used the following five-step approach, as discussed in chapter 2, to living theory action research advocated by McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (2009):

1　　**I experience a concern when some of my educational values are denied in my practice.** My concern was that my values and beliefs about educational quality were often denied by the implied expectation my role as school principal was to maintain the *status quo* of educational quality as an exclusionary, elitist, and quantitative concept based in interpersonal competition and materialism.

2　　**I imagine a solution to the concern.** I sought to recognize school situations where my values and beliefs about educational quality were being denied by the *status quo* and influenced others to do the same. Using data from semi-structured interviews, my reflective research journal, the literature, and discussions with participants, I imagined creating a meta-model of transformational quality that represented the collective values and beliefs of people in the school and local community. I searched for an understanding of educational quality that was life-affirming, need-fulfilling and performance-enhancing and would serve as a guide for planning, nurturing, and assessing quality in my school leadership thinking and actions as well as the consequences of my decisions.

3　　**I act in the direction of the imagined solution**. I initiated school reform in reframing the meaning of educational quality in critical areas where the *status quo* meaning of quality was notably contradictory of my own beliefs and those of the students and staff.

4　　**I evaluate the outcome of the solution.** I looked for contradiction between my "quality" intentions and the consequences of my actions. In order to gather more detailed and personal feedback, I met with a group of three critical friends: a school principal, psychologist, and secretary. The critical friends

observed me on a routine basis in my role as principal, and their feedback came from their first-hand experience of my leadership. I also met with a validation group of teachers, students, and parents of students twice a month for a year and a half to gather feedback and assess resonance.

5   I modify my practice, plans, and ideas in the light of the evaluation.

Based on the feedback I gathered from validation groups and critical friends, I modified my leadership approach and understanding to limit the contradictions between my intentions toward promoting transformational quality and the consequences of my decisions and actions.

The living theory approach required I produced evidence to demonstrate I had improved my practice as an educational leader for the good of others, and this evidence was validated by the people I claimed to have influenced for the better (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009; Reason and Bradbury, 2008; Shacklock and Smyth, 1998).

Data Collection Methods and Techniques

I used a multi-method qualitative approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Mason, 2002, 1996; Merriam, 2009) for collecting data, featuring semi-structured interviews, reflective journal writing, resonant action research panels, and critical friends.

Reflective journal writing (Blaikie, 2000; Schön, 1987; Schratz and Walker, 1995) allowed me to map my evolution in understanding quality in student/teacher development. It also served as a record of the decisions I made regarding student/teacher development as the school principal and my theoretical and pragmatic justification for my decisions (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998; Koutselini, 2008; Shacklock and Smyth, 1998). The research journal was a critical heuristic tool for self-understanding and transformation (Bruner, 1990; Cassam, 1997, 1994; Cooper, 1991;

Cooper and Dunlap, 1989; Dewey, 1933;).

I conducted semi-structured interviews (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Given, 2008) to gain deeper understanding and insight into people's values and beliefs and how they understood, modelled, and categorised quality experiences. I conducted semi-structured interviews at three state high schools in New England and a middle school and with four graduate education classes at a state college and university at which I served as an instructor. Collecting data from multiple sources besides my workplace allowed me to see the quality landscape of the school within the context of the state. Teacher interviews occurred in both focus group and individual interviews. A total of 74 teachers from three high schools, 30 teachers from the middle school level, 82 students from the high school level, 13 students from the middle level, and 90 graduate education students were interviewed through purposeful selection. Out of the 262 people interviewed, 43 of them were interviewed one-on-one, the others in focus groups. All adult focus group data collection were recorded and transcribed by me. All individual interviews were not recorded, and I took notes during the interview.

The selection process was purposeful as I sought a group of students who represented the full range of the school populace. At Potsdam High School, 27 students participated out of a school population of 311. At another high school in the state, 55 students were interviewed out of a population of 1,500. The 13 middle school participants came from a school of 600. All student interviews were done in a focus group. Interviews were not recorded, and I took notes during the semi-structured discussions. I discovered many students were uncomfortable with the taping during pilot studies and preferred to not have a recorder present. The data from the interviews were analysed by a seeking the least amount of thematic categories to explain the data and conversation analysis, which included observation of body language, tonality, and

pacing. As I stated above, I am a certified practitioner of Neuro-Linguistic

Programming (NLP), from training at the NLP Comprehensive in Denver, Colorado,

which included 120 hours of in-person classroom instruction with in-depth training

about understanding and interpreting body language cues and patterns.

The third data source was action research validation groups (McNiff, 2002;

Braud and Anderson, 1998). The validation groups served a twofold purpose: first, as a

means to seek validation of my research interpretations and findings, and, second, as an

action committee to initiate social change based on their participation in the action

research. The committee consisted of 12-14 teacher volunteers and two parents. I also

had a student validation group that consisted up of 11 students representing each grade

level in the school. I met with students once a month. These participants were integral to

the research as their input, imagination, creativity, and willingness to dialogue about

meaningful and challenging issues were invaluable, invigorating, and inspiring.

The last data source was from dialogue with critical friends (Costa and Kallick,

1993). I apply the following definition of a "critical friend":

> …one or more of the people you are working with. These critical friends should
>
> be willing to discuss your work sympathetically. You and your critical friend(s)
>
> choose each other, so you need to negotiate the ground rules of your relationship.
>
> This person can be your best ally, and you must never take him or her for
>
> granted. As well as expecting support from your friend(s), you must also be
>
> prepared to support in return. This means being available, even in unsocial hours,
>
> being able to offer as well as receive advice, even if it is painful or unwelcome,
>
> and always aiming to praise and offer support. (McNiff, et al.1996, p.30)

I had three critical friends (names are pseudonyms): Jim, a veteran secondary

school principal; Vanessa, a school psychologist; and Maureen, a high school secretary.

Jim, Vanessa, and Maureen were people I highly respected and trusted. They were willing to ask me probing and provocative questions, critique the data, and evaluate my conclusions. As a male researcher, I purposely chose to have two females and one male critical friend to gain a wide breadth of perspectives. Gender influences the way people conceptualise information and observe the world (Lovat, 1992), so I believed it critically necessary to have gender balance.

We spoke once a week for at least a half-hour over the course of two school years about the research. They told me where they thought I had blind spots in my thinking and when my interpretations of the data resonated with them or not. Due to the varied backgrounds of my critical friends, I gained insight from three unique perspectives: a leadership perspective from the principal, a mental health perspective from the school psychologist, and a behind-the-scenes perspective of how a school operates from the school secretary.

Through triangulation between interview and feedback data, journal entries, and educational praxis, I identified patterns of agreement and disagreement between all the different descriptions and examples of how participants understood, modelled, and conceptualised educational quality. I did not consider people's interview responses as right or wrong when analysing the data. All data from participants were considered true at the time the interviews occurred and were given equal value regardless of the power or social status of each participant. I did this to limit the risk my pre-understanding of, or biases towards, educational quality would invalidate potentially important information.

Issues of Validity and Standards of Judgement

I expect to resonate with the reader my research findings related to universal themes of power, class, and conflict that are inextricably linked to the meaning of quality

in education (Apple, 1999, 1996, 1982; Bache, 2008; Freire, 1985; Giroux, 1997, 1983, 1981; Hooks, 1994; McLaren and Leonard, 1993; McTaggart, 2011; Noddings, 2005, 2002). My standards of judgement were my leadership influence regarding student achievement, teacher performance, and improvement in the life-affirming and need-fulfilling academic and social milieu of the school culture. I also documented how the transformational model of quality I developed helped me to recognise and correct contradictions in my leadership between my behaviour and decisions and my educational values and beliefs.

Data Description

Self-Study Data

I recorded in the research journal every time I heard the word "quality" referred to in school or at school-related functions, such as athletic events. The following are examples I recorded that represent the data set:

> **A high school social studies teacher talking his class**, "I expect your homework to be quality. Follow all directions and complete it on time" (Research Journal 6/3/06).
>
> **A football coach talking his players:** "I expect a quality effort from all of you. Do your best, work together as a team. We act as one, and everyone does their job" (Research Journal 9/5/07).
>
> **An art teacher speaking to her class:** "Quality work doesn't mean you copy a picture perfectly. It is your representation of the picture as you see it using the skills you have learned in class" (Research Journal 7/3/07).

A teacher speaking to colleagues in the teachers. break room between classes: "These kids don't care about quality. They don't listen and don't do their homework. The work they do is sloppy. How do they expect to succeed in life with their attitude?" (Research Journal 29/5/06)

A parent speaking to her child during a teacher meeting: "You don't seem to care about the quality of your work, so I will for you. You will come home, and I will sit next to you until all your homework is done. You will get good grades even if I have to sit in class next to you. Maybe that's the embarrassment you need to start getting good grades" (Research Journal 29/2/06).

A board of education member speaking at a meeting: "Our number one concern is supporting high-quality education. We need quality teachers and classes if we are going to succeed" (Research journal, 29/3/06).

A teacher speaking at a meeting: "He's a quality kid. He's smart, a great athlete. I wish we had more kids like this" (Research journal, 29/3/07).

A student protesting a teacher's grade on her paper, "She says the work isn't quality! That's ridiculous. I worked hours on this paper. This is an A paper! What does she know about quality?" (Research journal15/10/08).

I also noted examples in school of when I used, thought about, or observed quality during the school day. My research journal revealed I often labelled daily experiences as "quality" when witnessing students helping each other in class or on the athletic fields, witnessing a teacher and a student, or seeing a class in deep rapport. I witnessed quality when watching a student give a passionate and knowledgeable presentation in front of their classmates and teacher. I noticed seemingly mundane things, such as the building's feeling comfortably warm on a cold winter day and the

fact that classrooms were well decorated and smelled pleasant, as quality. I recorded emotionally moving situations, such as handing a high school diploma at graduation to a student who I thought may never make it as quality; to a student excitedly telling me what he had learned in a class; to creating a successful school budget; to feelings of camaraderie between staff and students. A question that I considered as I reviewed my statements about quality was, How do I keep everything from becoming 'quality'? I sensed a real danger if the word remained such a vague concept. It was through learning from other people and reflecting on my own experience I planned on successfully answering this problematic question.

Semi-Structured Interviews

After interviewing 262 participants, I had an abundance of rich data about people's values, beliefs, and conceptualisations about quality. It was evident there was a mosaic of ways people defined and categorised quality. For instance, a high school science teacher, Keri, stated in an interview, "Quality is about meeting predetermined standards" (Research Journal 9/9/08). Jan, a high school art teacher, shared, "Quality is about fully expressing yourself and being who you are. It's about improving the expression of who you are" (Research Journal 9/3/07). Leandra, a high school guidance counsellor, believed that, "Quality is doing things well without hurting others" (Research Journal 14/2/07).

A varsity field hockey coach shared with me, "Quality occurs when things click. Like my team. Quality happens when the players are in rhythm with each other and using their skills and strategies effectively. Which is usually done without thinking because you practice so much your body remembers" (Research Journal 21/9/05).

In a focus group interview (9/5/07) of a teaching team at a state public school, I asked the question, "How do you understand and conceptualise the word quality as it

relates to American public school education?"

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Theresa, an art teacher: "Quality is about using your imagination and being creative. It is also about meeting a standard, but that's lesser quality in a way, you know what I mean? Quality is beautiful, and beauty is different between all of us isn't it?" (Research Journal 9/5/07).

Rob, social studies teacher: "Quality is like a good pair of pants! You know, it fits like it should; it's comfortable when you have the right fit. A good pair of pants, that's it. It's like Theresa said too it's about being creative, not just copying and doing it like everyone else. Not that this is always bad, but it's not always good that's for sure. So I guess I think quality is doing things good… hard to define you know. Something is good and you know it, like my pair of pants example" (Research Journal 9/5/07).

Helen, English teacher, "I want my students to see and feel beyond themselves. You know, if we are reading about the Holocaust, I don't want them to just know the dates and the (puts her hands up to denote she is inserting verbal quotation marks) 'official story.' If they can't transcend themselves they never will get it. They won't know anything; they would just have learned some ultimately useless facts, if you can even call them that. Quality is about knowing how to do the basics, feel competent about your skills, and seeking to see and feel beyond yourself. You listen, you really hear others. All that comes together to define quality the way I paint it" (Research Journal 9/5/07).

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This small data set illustrates the wide range of depth and breadth of people's different understandings of educational quality. By the time I was finished collecting data I had hundreds of different stories reflecting people's values and beliefs regarding quality's meaning. The challenge was to create a meta-model of quality that mapped all

the various categories of people's understandings, models, and conceptualisations of educational quality into a cogent model of quality's meaning.

Interpretations of the Data and Creation of Transformational Quality (TQ) Theory

I discovered, after five months of painstakingly searching for patterns in the plethora of data, all the data I collected about quality fit into four general thematic categories: biological/physical, psychological/intellectual, sociological, and existential.
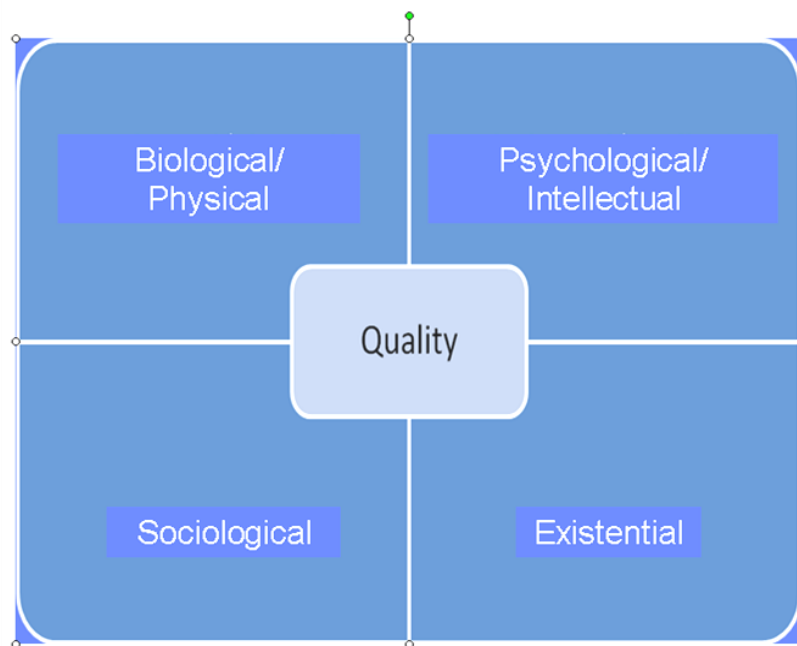
Fig. 3. Four Quadrants of the Meaning of Quality

Biological/Physical Quality: Quality in this dimension is about sustaining and improving biological/physical health and experiencing desirable biological/physical processes and feelings. It is also about protecting, nurturing, and respecting life, both human and non-human. Biological/physical quality addresses such questions as:

- How do I demonstrate care for my own body and respect for the bodies of others?

- What do I do to experience desirable physical feeling in way respectful of

my own body and the bodies of others?

- How do I demonstrate I understand my own body and my control of it?

Psychological/Intellectual Quality: Quality is about constructing personal meaning from information, having emotional maturity and availability, knowing when to follow directions, empathy, and gaining the knowledge and skills necessary to function effectively in society and feel competent. Psychological/Intellectual quality addresses such questions as:

- How does what I know help me understand who I am and my position in the world?

- How do I know I am competent at something?

- How can I do I show I know the process of being competent at something?

- How can I improve the view of my community, and the larger world, to make it a better place to live for myself and other people?

- How do I manage my emotions and thought process to be a highly functioning human being?

- How do I achieve authentic happiness?

- How can I love and find love?

- How do I establish a life of meaning?

Sociological Quality: Quality is about working effectively with others. It is about showing care for the freedom, safety, and well-being of others. It is being able to know the right time to be a leader, a follower, or an independent. It is about respecting the sanctity of others and respecting the right of people to choose their own identity. In this dimension, quality is reflected in being able to establish rapport with a diverse group of people. Sociological quality is an active desire for social justice and equality

and addresses questions such as:

- How do I show others I care?

- How do I know other people care about me?

- How do I disagree with others without being disagreeable?

- How do I show respect for other people's basic needs?

- How do I find and sustain a sense of belongingness?

- How can I improve my positive rapport the people?

- How can I make my sense of the world a more peaceful, need-fulfilling, and meaningful place to live?

- How can I help others and myself improve?

- How can I see situations from other perspectives so that I can understand the values and beliefs of other people better?

- How can I improve my sense of "we" in my daily interactions with other people?

- How can I improve the happiness of others?

Existential Quality: Quality is about people understanding the beauty, pleasure, angst, and cruelty of living in the world and maintaining curiosity in the wonders of being alive while finding meaning in it. It is experiencing the joy and anxiety of being free and accepting responsibility for one's own life. A person experiences his or her unique individuality and respects the right of others to express themselves. Existential quality is gaining knowledge from within our own lives and not from a source outside of the self. The expression of existential quality is evident in an education context when people test their self-produced theories of knowledge though comparing and contrasting it with others through authentic listening and a spirit of willingness to synthesise

174

differing theories when possible. The experience of comparing and contrasting one's own living theories with other peoples' living theories leads to the rejection, adjustment, or validation of self-produced theories of knowledge. Existential quality addresses the questions:

- How do I know what I know and how is it meaningful?

- Who have I chosen to be?

- Does my identity promote peace, happiness, and contentment in my life and the lives of others?

- How do I experience freedom without hurting others?

- How can I better accept responsibility for my life and improve my skill in overcoming the anxiety of facing uncertainty?

- How do I improve the milieu of the places in which I live and work to improve my own and other peoples' sense of hope, meaning, and will to live?

Existential quality, in essence, is about people's learning how to be self-aware and other-aware to improve life.

I constructed two subcategories of meaning within each quadrant of quality's meaning: common and meta-normal. The subcategory of "common quality" in each quadrant of quality's meaning deals with meeting a predetermined standard. The "meta-normal quality" subcategory of quality's meaning deals with understandings of quality that transcend meeting a predetermined standard in each quadrant of quality's meaning: These consist of the three further subcategories: transcendent, transpersonal and ineffable. The following illustration shows how I perceived the categories within each quadrant of quality. Important to note are the dotted lines making up the circle as they portray the idea that quality experience is fluid and open and is not necessarily

restrained to any one category at any one time. It is an open system, not a closed and bounded system.
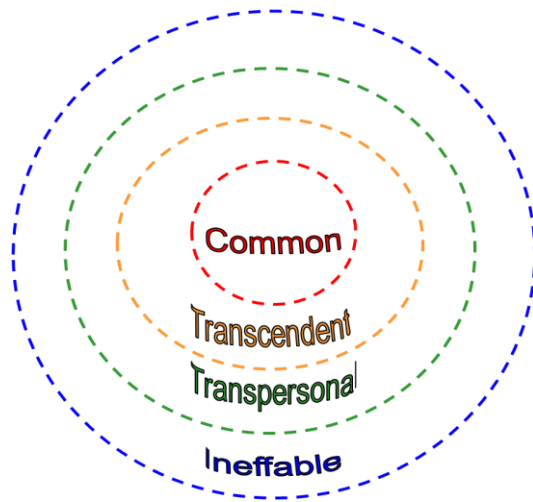
Fig. 4. Dimensions of Quality Experience in Each Quadrant of the Meaning of Quality

The three subcategories are further detailed in the following figure below with quotes from participants to illustrate examples of meaning:

Fig. 5. The Meta-Normal Dimensions of the Meaning of Quality

The following is an example of how I incorporated all the data into a cogent conceptual explanatory framework. I have included quotes from participants as examples of how statements were categorised in the framework.

Living Dimension	Field	Sub Fields	Quality Statement
Biological/ Physiological	Common ("fitness for purpose")		"In quality my body feels great. Everything is in tune." "Quality: I'm comfortable with my body."

Living Dimension	Field	Sub Fields	Quality Statement
	Meta-normal	*Transcendent*	"Quality is when I seemingly leave my body and watch it work. It's a great feeling."
		Transpersonal	"It's as if our bodies come together on the field. We each feel where each other is going" (reference to field hockey).
		Ineffable	"I have had amazing quality experiences with my dog. We understand each other at a level I can't describe. Unless you have a dog you have been close to, you won't know what I mean.
Intellectual/ Psychological	**Common ("fitness for purpose")**		**"I'm thinking clearly. Quality is when I'm not distracted and focused on the task at hand"**
	Meta-normal	*Transcendent*	"I sort of watch my mind work. When I'm having a quality experience I don't so much think as I watch myself, allow myself to think freely."

Living Dimension	Field	Sub Fields	Quality Statement
		Transpersonal	"Quality happens when I am working well with my partner. Together we want to good and we know, without telling each other, that we really want to help each other."
		Ineffable	"I can't explain it … how quality feels when you're in the boat. The harmony is so amazing; there are no words for it. Your mind meshes with the experience. The experience of perfect rhythm and harmony and in a way you're still thinking, but you're not controlling it and what you're thinking, there really are no words for. It's kind of weird."
Sociological	**Common ("fitness for purpose")**		**"You get along with others in quality."**

Living Dimension	Field	Sub Fields	Quality Statement
	Meta-normal	*Transcendent*	"During a baseball game at the stadium it gets so loud the sound carries you away. You lose yourself for a moment in the thrill of the moment. It's a great experience, what going to the game is all about."
		Transpersonal	"When I am working with a student and it is quality, we really connect. It is not so much me teaching him as it is me watching him learn and guiding him in the best paths or choices. We become partners in the experience of learning."
		Ineffable	"Concerts are quality to me. When it's a quality show, the music is happening and everyone is sort of into the whole scene. You can feel the whole crowd come together. That's what a quality show is like. It's a powerful thing; you know what I mean."

Living Dimension	Field	Sub Fields	Quality Statement
Existential	**Common ("fitness for purpose")**		**"Quality happens when I experience quiet. It's a meaningful experience. It puts me back in harmony."**
	Meta-normal	*Transcendent*	"I left my body during the game. The whole thing play was quality. One instance I was in our end of the field, and the next I was scoring a goal. Right after a goal everything was normal again. It was like I tapped into something for that play. Wow, it was great!"
		Transpersonal	"My goal is for students to connect themselves with their art. However, I also want them to express themselves to others through their art. Quality is doing both."

Living Dimension	Field	Sub Fields	Quality Statement
		Ineffable	"During mediation I experience quality in a way I can't express in words. It is a source of freedom. It keeps me balanced in a way I can't express in words."

Fig. 6. Explanatory Framework of the Meaning of Educational Quality

I call this new model Transformational Quality (TQ) theory, and it conceptually looks like the following figure.
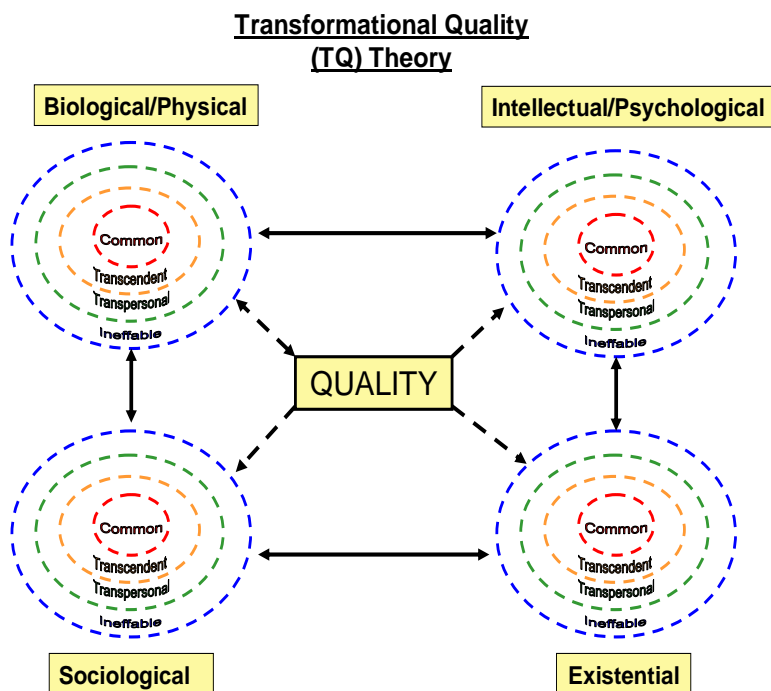
Fig. 7. Transformational Quality (TQ) theory

I found I could more accurately identify and assess where a person sought quality most often and where quality had been ignored and required attention by using the model. Furthermore, I could better identify contradictions between my quality intentions and the consequence of my actions. This explanatory model served as an excellent and innovative new way by which to understand quality. I then looked through the data to help me find a way to navigate quality in action using the map. After all, the map is not the territory, and I needed to know more about the territory of quality to use the map effectively. I searched through the data and discovered eight behaviours that helped people and me successfully navigate optimal ways to initiate, discover, and promote educational quality.

The Eight Behaviours of Transformational Educational Quality:

The C.A.P.A.C.I.T.Y. Model

The explanatory model of TQT describes the landscape of the meaning of quality with depth, breadth, and specificity. In order to understand how best to navigate through this landscape as a leader, I gleaned from interview data and my reflective research journal eight quality behaviours for improving the capacity for quality learning and experience. I dub the eight behaviours in the relevant pneumonic acronym C.A.P.A.C.I.T.Y.

C   Care for others

A   Autotelic

P   Prepared

A   Alliance with others

C   Choice

I   I/You-Us

T   Training

Y   Yearn to succeed

1   Care for Others

A system of incentives, rewards, and punishments as ways to motivate people to behave, get along with others, and accomplish tasks was not usually affiliated with participants' understanding of quality. Participants often stated when they were treated in a quid pro quo manner that it diminished their potential for quality (Bache, 2008; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, 1998; Hamilton, 2001; Frankl, 2000, 1984; Freire, 1998, 1970a, 1970b; Glasser, 1998, 1992; Leonard, 1991; Maslow, 1987, 1968; Merton, 1981; Pirsig, 1974; Rogers, 1980).

For instance, Seth, a high school senior, stated:

You know pizza is cool as a class reward and I won't turn it down. Maybe, now and then, I'll work for a prize, but not usually. The prizes in school just don't seem worth the work. I don't like being fooled anyways. I usually work a little harder for a teacher who is cool, though. You know, a teacher who doesn't talk down to you and cares. (Research Journal 10/1/06)

Gary, a high school science teacher, said:

I just want to teach, connect with kids, help them succeed and feel good about who they are becoming. Principals and superintendents seem to forget why we are here. It is reform after reform, new program after new program, and the same rhetoric we are improving quality, and, in the end, basically everything stays the same, except that teachers are exhausted from all the paperwork, time, and training that led to nowhere. But we have to do it if we want to work here. If an administration really cared about quality, they would show more care toward people, not programs and numbers. (Research Journal 3/5/2007)

Caring rapport with other people was repeatedly professed by participants as a key behaviour conducive to educational quality. Most participants said when they felt "used" or "manipulated" by someone else, they found it difficult to achieve or want to pursue quality.

The data showed that participants believed the potential for quality was higher when people worked together for a common purpose, goal, or interest. Participants consistently spoke of caring for others and oneself as part of their understanding of quality. Showing care was often defined as "listening", "being empathetic," and "taking action to make things better." The abilities to meet one's own needs and the needs of others were posited as critical to achieving quality (Glasser, 1999, 1998). Participants clearly professed a belief that quality in public education involved more than intellectual and physical development. Equally important was a sense of caring about the well-being of others, establishing rapport, and forging peaceful relationships (Goleman, 1997; Krishnamurti, J., 1995; Nodding, 2005, 2002, 1995; Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Nelda, Dutton, Kleiner, Lucas and Smith, 2000).

2 Autotelic Action

My reflective journal and data from participant interviews consistently showed that autotelic behaviour was considered a quality-inductive behaviour. Csikszentmihalyi (1993) identifies five ways people foster being autotelic, and these align with the data I collected about people's understanding of how to achieve quality:

- Setting goals that have clear and immediate feedback

- Becoming immersed in the particular activity

- Paying attention to what is happening in the moment

- Learning to enjoy immediate experience

- Proportioning one's skills to the challenge at hand (178-79)

Students said quality most often occurred when they weren't bored, overly anxious, or fearful. School management, teachers, and community members concurred, though not to the same degree. There was a stream of belief within teachers, management, and in the community that students perform at a higher level if they are to some degree fearful of consequences and experience the anxiety of possible failure. There was also the general belief that being bored is something students need to get used to because, as a community member said, "In life many things are boring, waiting in line, stuck in traffic on the highway, for example. It's boring and if students don't get used to dealing with it, they won't function well in society" (Research Journal 11/9/06). There is potential wisdom in both views' using TQT as a model for understanding educational quality.

3   Prepared

I interviewed a two-time National Football League Super Bowl champion to talk about his understanding of quality. He believed passionately preparation was a core value of quality. Overwhelmingly, education staff, prospective teachers, and school authorities shared with me that preparation was highly valued as a condition to achieve, recognise, and assess quality. The only exception to this was from the student population of interviewees. Students who struggled in school often professed preparation to be overrated. They saw preparation as relevant to the teachers' desires and not to their successfully learning. The following quotes were typical from struggling students I interviewed:

> Some teachers think bringing a pencil to class is a huge deal. They believe I can't do quality work unless I come with my plan book and pencil. It's stupid! I can borrow a pencil, and I don't need a plan book. I can remember in my head. Can you believe my math teacher takes points off my grade every day I am not, in her world, prepared? It's a joke" (Research Journal 3/16/05)

All my teacher seems to talk about is being prepared. I am prepared, but not in the way he wants it. He says I have to have my textbook, and I say it is too big to carry around. I can read on with someone else. What's the big deal? (3/3/06) I got a C-on my report card for English. That's a great grade for me. That's quality to me. But my teacher puts next to my grade the comment, "unprepared for class." What's her problem? I earn a good grade, and my parents are on me because the teacher puts a bad comment. How about, "Good job Ken"? Nope, she focused on me not having a pen and pencil for class and not on how good I did. This school is a joke. (Research Journal 4/5/06).

Students, in regards to quality outside of the classroom, uniformly talked about the importance of preparing for sport competitions, school plays, and musical concerts to get quality results. The disagreement students had about preparation seemed to emanate from being punished for lack of preparedness in the classroom. As a school leader, I learned from this finding that teachers could reframe this issue by having students learn organically that being unprepared rarely resulted in quality. Eliminating the point deductions and negative comments and focusing on creating a learning environment that inspired students to be prepared was more likely to harmonise educators' and struggling students' understanding of quality.

4   Alliance with Others

Participants uniformly spoke of the importance of bonding or connecting with other people as an important behaviour of quality in teaching and learning. The importance of feeling part of a team or partnership Often teachers spoke of quality as a sense of "being one" in the classroom. Students said quality involved a sense of friendliness between classmates and teachers and students, and parents said quality involved feeling as if teachers were partners in their child's development. The

behaviour of alliance with others was seen as important to participants to feel safe and as though they belonged. Quality is unlikely achievable with others when a person feels unsafe or alienated (Bennett-Goleman, 2001; Goleman, 1997; Hart, Nelson and Puhakka, 2000).

5 Choice

The behaviour of choice was the least popular of the eight behaviours of educational quality but was a notable pattern in the data. Teachers, parents, community members, and school officials demonstrated a restrained belief that choice was a necessary behaviour of quality in a public school context. Though a slim majority believed choice was an important behaviour of quality, a notable number believed providing students' with choices was the reason for a fledgling American public education system. These participants referred to traditional education beliefs that students should be well behaved, quiet, and obedient. These participants perceived students as ideally having a minor role in choosing the content and context of their learning. The only sense of choice these participants saw as necessary were students' choosing elective classes.

Interestingly, when asked about the importance of choice in their job, these same participants uniformly believed there was a close relationship between choice and quality. It seems clear that choice is an important behaviour of quality, though there were participants who disagreed with my inclusion of this behaviour in my development of TQT in relation to the teacher-student relationship.

6 "I-You/Us" orientation

As discussed in chapter two, Martin Buber (1958) professed we should strive for "I-thou" relationships. These are relationships based on treating others as mutually important and deserving of respect (McTaggart, 2008a, 2008b). As such, I don't

objectify you, or try to manipulate you for my own gain. The aim is to talk with people, not at people, and to respect the interconnectedness of all life (Capra, 1996). In "I-It" relationships, I objectify and manipulate you for my own gain. I don't see *you*; I see what you can do for *me.*

The data revealed participants' consistently supporting the idea quality was often a result of what Buber called an "I-thou" orientation toward others. I made a modification to Buber's "I-You" construct, based on the data, to reflect the belief of participants more accurately. Participants posited an "I-You/Us" behaviour was equally important when working in a group setting to assess and recognise quality. Interestingly, participants' stated that "I-You/Us" behaviour was rare in their experience of school.

7   Training

The word "training" wasn't explicitly used across the data set of participant interviews. Synonyms of training were, however, such as "coach", "shape", "practice", "instruct", "develop", "steer," and "readying." The behaviour of training aptly encapsulates the concept. Participants believed quality required training that resulted in increasing a person's achievement level and potential for success. Training for training's sake was bemoaned by all participants, who believed training had to have a clear goal and focus to maintain a person's interest and willingness to expend effort. Training, therefore, is behaviour of quality when it increases a person's achievement level and potential for success and has clearly defined goals and focus. Training in school is for becoming competent not only in academics, but also in our everyday thinking and behaviour as citizens of a democracy.

8. Yearn to Succeed

Yearning to succeed was the most popular behaviour of quality about which

participants spoke. Participants spoke of a close relationship between quality and having an intrinsic desire to succeed. The common categorical belief of participants was that "raw talent" was not enough for consistently attaining quality. Students talked about how they knew someone who was really good at something and became average because they did not try hard or did not care to practice. Teachers talked about the importance of intrinsic motivation and the desire to succeed for students to attain quality. School officials spoke about quality as requiring a desire to succeed in the face of leadership challenges that sometimes seemed insurmountable. Clearly, people highly valued the importance of intrinsic motivation and a yearning to succeed and believed quality was best achieved through this behaviour.

Integrating the explanatory model of quality I created with the eight behaviours of quality, represented by the acronym C.A.P.C.I.T.Y., resulted in what I have named Transformational Quality (TQ) theory. The following is an illustration of the model in its totality:
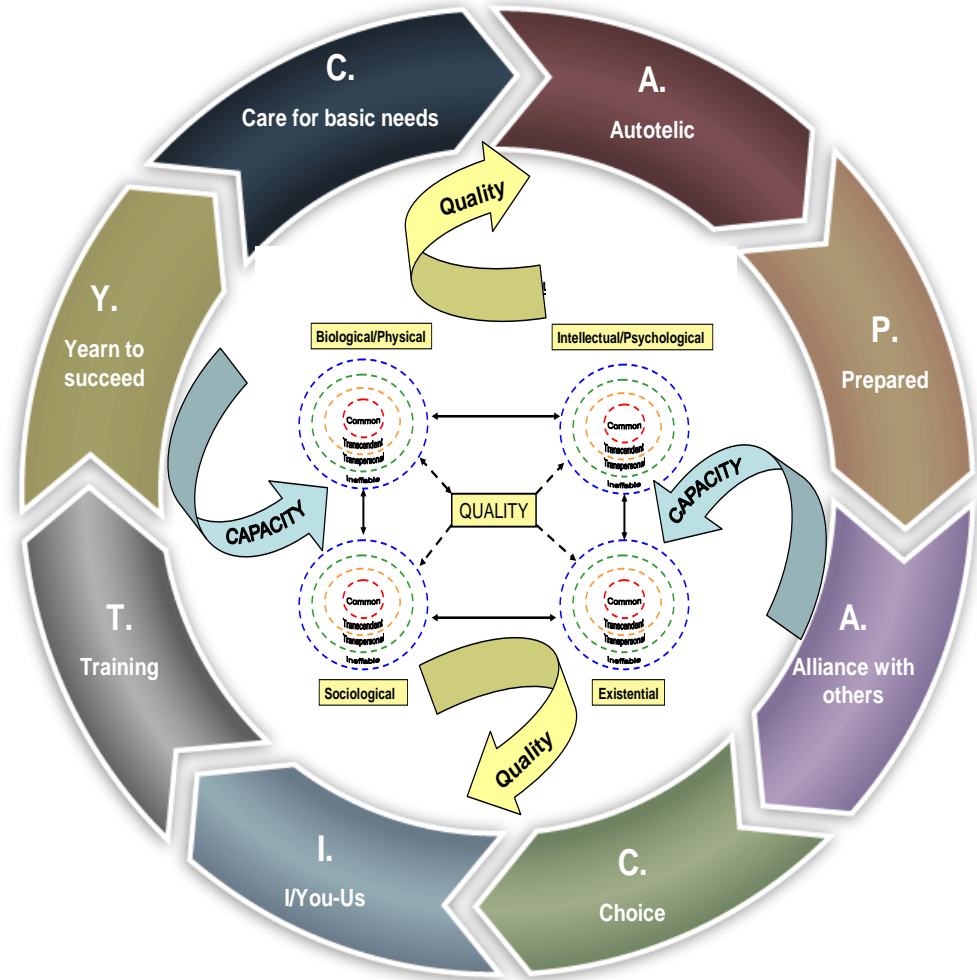
Fig. 8. Transformational Quality (TQ) Theory: Complete Model

Evidence of TQT Effect on School Culture at Potsdam High School

I incrementally shared the TQ model with staff, students, school officials, and parents as we worked together to transform the school culture. I had regular meetings with people regarding how we could more fully address a transformational understanding of educational quality in school. I urged people to think of solutions to quality problems we had and to recommend ideas to solve these problems. As a result of everyone's working together with a unified transformational understanding of quality's meaning and using behaviours that promoted quality, we successfully transformed the

curriculum, pedagogy, sport programs, and school climate in the short amount of time of two years.

The results of using TQT as a guide for my leadership decisions and actions resulted in notable transformational changes at Potsdam High School. In my first two years, we accomplished impactful changes to improve student learning, teacher performance, and transformation of the academic and social milieu of the school:

- We tripled the amount of advanced placement courses offered that allowed students to gain college credit in certain high school classes and save money for future college expenses. The courses chosen were selected by students and teachers, and any student willing to give effort in a course was allowed to enrol. Previously, a teacher had to recommend a student for the class. Teachers also received extensive training to improve their capacity to diversify learning experiences and improve formative and summative assessments of learning.

- We created mixed-ability grouping for all ninth grade student classes. Before, the school divided students into four separate learning groups for classes: advanced placement, honours, college-preparatory, and basic skills (non-college preparatory). The previous two years, fifty per cent of ninth grade students failed at least one class. After six months of using mixed-ability grouping for instruction, only one student had a failing grade in a class.

- We started a Gay/Straight Alliance group as students, gay and straight, believed it helped students to feel a part of something meaningful that would promote acceptance in the school.

- Thanks to teachers, coaches, students, and the superintendent, we were the first school in New England to pilot "Coaching for Life," a national initiative

founded by former National Football League star Joe Ehrman. Ehrman worked in person with our students and staff to help us improve everyone's focus on raising healthy men and women on and off the athletic field.

● Senior students proposed a relaxation lounge to alleviate student stress and promote conversations between students, and we created a successful one.

● We initiated a school media studies program and a women's studies program, created teacher and student advisory groups to help govern the school, and started a classroom parent volunteer program.

● With the support of the school superintendent and school coaches, I initiated the process of changing the athletic league in which the school sports teams competed. Our school was small, with 397 students, and we were competing against schools with a 1,500 students. Our sports teams had been uncompetitive and the morale had been low. Instead of accepting the *status quo*, the school changed leagues, and there was fair and balanced competition. This move was initially unpopular with a notable group of people. It was rare for a school to initiate a league change and be able to join another league. Committed to having our student-athletes be involved in quality competition, we overcame all obstacles to create a quality sports program.

Exposing Contradictions in My School Leadership Using TQT

TQT also helped me to understand contradictions between my leadership intentions and the empirical consequences of my decisions and actions. I had, at times, mistakenly believed that my intentions of promoting quality were congruent with the people with whom I worked. After creating TQT, I realised I had sometimes failed to recognise where other people's categorical quality needs were and to demonstrate quality behaviour congruent with meeting their needs.

I also at times had ignored abiding by the eight behaviours of quality. When I acted without taking into account other people's values and beliefs, they perceived change to the *status quo* I advocated as threatening. When this occurred, efforts to enact successful change most often failed. In using TQT as my philosophical guide, I came to realise that I had contradicted my values and beliefs numerous times over the first two years of my principalship. I realised, at times when I dealt with difficult people, I fell into an authoritarian mode of leadership and did not take the time to listen. This authoritarian posture rarely led to quality and often led to negative impacts on the school culture. Examples of negative impacts from my contradictory leadership behaviour included a student's dropping out of school and the unexpected early retirement or resignation of numerous teachers and one popular athletic coach. In these situations, I felt justified to take a firm stance. After creating TQT as my guide, I realised my error was not in my firm stance, but in not taking the time to listen authentically and seeking ways to help people learn from their mistakes and improve while feeling supported.

I had failed to assume a posture of transformational quality and its negative effects on human lives in the school. TQT illuminated weaknesses in my school leadership that needed to be addressed. I have improved on my weaknesses and continue to work to improve my capacity as a more life-affirming and need-fulfilling person who helps other people improve their performance

The Potential Significance of My Creation of Transformational Quality (TQ) Theory

As a professed critical theorist and humanistic leader, I created this theory so I could, "walk the talk" of liberation, freedom, and respect through the concept of educational quality. The education research literature has a paltry amount of formal PhD action research based on school leaders who problematized their own practice and

examined contradictions between their practice and beliefs and values. Contrarily, there is a notable depth of living theory action research conducted by teachers at the PhD level (McNiff and Whitehead, 2009, 2005). There is also a dearth of educational leadership research focused on the nature of transformational quality in American public high schools; rather, the vast majority of research is focused on the perceived correlates of quality (e.g., grades, standardised test scores, and awards). I looked at the concept of educational quality in an original way because I synthesised ideas about it that had not been put together before into a cogent model of understanding and used that model successfully in professional praxis. This study, therefore, is a unique and potentially significant contribution to the education literature concerning school leader action research and transforming the understanding and modelling of education quality in public education.

Thoughts about the Impact in Creating TQT

Creating and using TQT had a profound influence and impact on improving my awareness of my leadership influence in creating a school of transformational quality and hope. It facilitated understanding of my decision-making process at the level of sense and soul (Wilber, 1998) and improved my skills of empathetic listening, awareness, and being present in the moment. Most notably, it challenged me to be a more need-fulfilling, just, and caring school leader who acted with sensitivity to the values and beliefs of other people.

I was a transformed leader and human being because of the journey taken in creating TQT. I more fully realised the influence and impact my existence has on other people: on their learning, sense of meaning, and sense of worth and being cared about. I was attuned to my responsibility of transforming the social formations of the places where I work and live to be life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing

environments.

The question that needed to be addressed after creating TQT was, "How did it work, holistically, in praxis?" The next chapter discusses the answer to this question in depth. Though evidence was given in this chapter of the social and academic changes that occurred due to the creation and use of TQT as a guiding philosophy for quality, I need to explore the nuances and effects it had on the people I served as principal. Did my rhetoric of TQT translate into a life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing concept for the people whom I served? The next chapter of the thesis explores two case studies dealing with TQ in praxis in influencing curriculum and pedagogical reform and critical incidents that arose because of the reforms.

I conclude the chapter with the graphic I made into a badge I wore to remind me to embrace the behaviours of transformational quality and to understand where other peoples', and my own, quality needs are and how I can best meet them.

Fig. 9. Quality Badge

CHAPTER FIVE

Using Transformational Quality (TQ) Theory as a Guide to Developing and Fostering Creativity, Resiliency, and Optimism in Myself and Other People during All-Encompassing Social, Academic, and Institutional School Reform

I assumed the principalship of an American high school in December 2006 that was failing both socially and academically to meet the needs of a notable number of students. I was hired to transform the school into a vibrant learning community where student success, a friendly air among students, and an air of collegiality among faculty and staff were to be the norm. The following quote, appearing earlier in chapter one of the thesis, posted on a state education blog about Potsdam High School (PHS) illustrated the volatile atmosphere of the school prior to my arrival as the school principal:

> My family and I moved here from another district in Connecticut and had to move after a month. My daughter was the only Hispanic girl in the school and was tormented by her classmates and believes she was even discriminated against by her teachers!!!! When she came home crying one day I reported the harassment to the school and they replied, "There is nothing we can do about it." Also, I reported an incident of discrimination where my daughter was called a "spic" to the police department who said, "It wasn't a big deal," and were very rude to me and treated me and my family as if we were inferior .This school and the town of Potsdam are abominations to American society. Ignorance and intolerance is ramped in this poor country town with a failing school system. (Posted by a PHS parent on 11/22/05)

The following blog entry was posted months into my new position:

Although per-pupil spending is high (and rising), this is a terrible high school. It offers few advanced classes, few extracurricular activities other than athletics, and little teacher interest. The principal is new, and seems competent and enthusiastic, but he's fighting a strong headwind. Most concern in town is directed towards the teams' performance, not academics. A regional school would be good, but town pride stands in the way.

(Posted by a PHS parent on 03/17/07)

CASE STUDY 1: How can I improve my life-affirming and need-fulfilling capacity to understand and model the meaning of educational quality to improve the social and academic milieu of PHS through curriculum and course offering reform?

I believed the best way initially to approach answering the case study action research question would be to find out first-hand from teachers and students how and if the courses and curriculum they were taught were meeting the academic and social needs of students. I needed to know if they were life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing and what their ideas were for new course offerings and curriculum reform.

I interviewed all the teachers in the school. The interview protocol for teachers and the way I handled the data are detailed below. I asked them the following questions:

1 How do your courses meet students' needs, affirm their lives, and enhance their performance as learners?

2 If you could teach any courses you wanted, or recreate the courses you currently teach, including the creation of new ones, what courses would they be, and what changes would you make, and why?

3   What are the barriers keeping you from being more successful as a teacher in the classroom? What is your perspective on why those barriers are there? How can these barriers be overcome? What can I do to help?

I interpreted the data from the teacher interviews by categorising responses to the correlating quadrant and dimension of quality being referenced according to the TQT explanatory framework. The following example illustrates how I did this.

I interviewed a social studies teacher, Mary (a veteran of thirty years teaching), who taught a class in American Government, and asked her to share with me how her courses met students' needs in the four areas of quality. Below is an example of how I analysed the teacher's responses:

Interpretation of Mary's Course

Biological/Physical and Intellectual/Psychological

●   Understand how our government works understand and practice being a good citizen

●   Gain alternative perspectives about history and our government

●   Understand human rights

●   Promote patriotism

●   Understand rules of law

●   Understand how a democracy works as opposed to other forms of government

●   Promote the importance of voting

●   Learn how the U.S. government came to be and how it has evolved

Sociological Existential

●   Learn how to work collaboratively with others

After analysing the course through TQT as a hermeneutical filter, I found that the existential quadrant was not addressed at all, and the intellectual/psychological and sociological quadrant dimensions of quality were addressed at the basic level and not in the meta-normal dimensions to any discernible degree. As I did with all teachers, I had a follow-up meeting with Mary where I shared my interpretations of the course with her and asked for feedback on both my interpretation and on feedback on how the course could be improved to be TQ-conducive.

Her view about the potential for change and improvement of her course was reflected in her statement to me: "I want to do more, but there is no curriculum other than to follow the textbook we have, and it is more than ten years old. I do the best I can. If I had a choice I would make this class much better" (Research Journal 4/6/06). Her answer echoed the sentiments of the overwhelming majority of other teachers I interviewed during the time frame of April 2006 to June 2006 for seeking approval of new and revised courses for the 2007-2008 school year.

Most teachers stated they were aware of the need for major improvement in the content and context of their curriculum, course, and pedagogy, and that if they had a choice they would make changes and improvements. I reflected on what made them feel so powerless that they felt they had no choice. Looking at the serving vice-principal, who had been the previous principal for a few years, and knowing the principal before her tenure, I knew the staff had been under the leadership of people who were proponents of micromanagement and an authoritarian approach to leadership. The faculty was used to being told things to do and not asked how they could improve performance and the social and academic milieu of the school. I wanted to improve our curriculum, courses, and pedagogical approaches by promoting teacher and student ownership of courses and by providing them with opportunities to create new courses

200

and restructure older ones.

I invited students and teachers to propose new courses, or revise current courses, of higher quality. I planned to have the new courses and revisions implemented in the following school year. Conventional education leadership wisdom is to implement change over a five-to-eight-year time span. "Experts on school reform, as well as the architects of reform, estimate that it takes five to eight years to introduce and implement a comprehensive school reform and build steadily rising student achievement" (Smith, 2005). The reason for this is that change is often a difficult process for people after becoming familiar and feeling safe with a status quo. I ignored this conventional wisdom, however, as I perceived the situation at PHS to be in such an impoverished state it required substantial change by the next school year of 2008 (only seven months away from the initiation of the reform effort).

Over the course of five months (9/07-2/08), I met with teachers and students on a regular basis to gather proposals and listen to input. I created staff and student advisory groups made up of people willing to volunteer their time. The advisory groups considered proposals and discussed the merits and feasibility of pursuing recommendations. Based on the feedback from advisory groups, new courses were developed, resources gathered, and revisions for older courses approved.

To jumpstart interest and dialogue about creating new courses in our school's community, I shared my recommendations for new courses and curriculum reform ideas with staff and students through both formal meetings and in casual dialogue. I shared with people what new programs and courses I was interested in implementing and improving for the next school year using TQT as a model for meeting the holistic quality needs of students. A women's studies program, a media literacy course, advanced art classes and drama, and advanced physical education courses focused on

collaborative team work. I pointed out that books written by and about women were virtually absent from our English and social studies classes.

Specifically, I was concerned that women's issues, minority and ethnic studies, and critical perspectives about American society were often ignored in our classroom learning. I believed a women's studies program would add more balance and diversity to student learning, and it was socially unjust to not show equal respect to women's literature and issues.

We live in an evolving digital world, so I also saw it as critically important to help students learn to be critical and competent in media literacy. We had notable numbers of students hoping to have a future in art, and we offered nothing at an advanced level for them. We needed advanced courses in art to meet the needs of the art-focused student better. The basis for developing new courses and revamping course curricula was to address the multiple intelligences of students and to offer courses that filled obvious gaps in our school's learning program to meet students' TQ needs.

I demonstrated that I felt safe in taking risks and sharing my ideas, hoping to influence others to feel the same way. By professing daily my commitment to offering new courses for the next school year, it only took a week before people started to share with me ideas for new classes. This happened for the next three weeks, after which I had a list of twenty-seven new course ideas. I brought these courses to the student and staff advisory groups for consideration. We scrutinised each course proposal in light of how it would better meet the TQ needs of our student population. I assumed an equal role in the meetings and welcomed others to facilitate our discussions. If no one wanted to facilitate on a certain day, I would serve the role as needed.

A valid question to consider is whether I unintentionally influenced others and was not perceived as assuming an equal role, but rather a more powerful role in the

process. I played an equal role as possible under the rule that a majority decision of the advisory group members decided what new courses would be chosen. I was afforded one vote like all other group members. After three months of discussions, we agreed to seek approval for 19 new courses.

Student and staff advisory groups wanted to implement 13 of the courses the next school year and six the year after. The following are the 19 courses, each course description verbatim copies of the official course descriptions, for which we sought approval by the superintendent and board of education:

1   Women's Studies

Course Description: This course introduces students to women in United States history starting with the colonial era through to the present time. The course looks at the fundamental social institutions of the family, the state, the economy, and religion, to see how these institutions have shaped women's lives, and in turn, how women have shaped these institutions. The course will run in conjunction with American Women in Literature, which covers a wide range of writings that mark women's multi-faceted experiences. Readings, films, class projects, trips, and cultural events all shape this course.

2   American Women in Literature

Course Description: This course is designed to introduce students to the study of literature written by and about women. Students will read poetry, drama, fiction, and non-fiction. By the end of the course, students will be able to identify how women's roles have helped to shape and define literature, history, and society.

3   Portfolio Presentation

Course Description: This course is designed for the advanced, college-bound junior and senior art students interested in preparing for and pursuing an art career. Each student will have a specific list of 10 to 12 projects to complete during the term. This

course teaches how to market a student portfolio, select, critique work, and create the best presentation to meet the needs of advanced, college-bound art majors and those going into an art career upon graduation.

4 Media Literacy for the 21st Century

Course Description: This course provides the framework to access, analyse, evaluate, and create messages in various forms from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy.

5 Pottery 2

Course Description: This class will start by reviewing wedging, hand building, wheel throwing, and glazing. Students then write a contract to create 5 or more projects of their choice. This contract allows each student to develop his or her own style and to pursue the area of pottery that interests him or her most. Critiques and demonstrations are also included.

6 AP Environmental Science

Course Description: This course will provide students with the scientific principles, concepts, and methodologies required to understand the interrelationships of the natural world, to identify and analyse environmental problems both natural and human-made, to evaluate the relative risks associated with these problems, and to examine alternative solutions for resolving and/or preventing them. All students enrolled must take the AP Environmental Science examination in May sponsored by the Education Testing Service. Passing this strenuous test could allow the student to receive 3 college credits.

7 AP European History

Course Description: This AP course is an introductory college course; it is not

easy, but neither is it impossibly difficult. Compared with honour-level courses, AP European History will be more demanding, but also more rewarding. The course allows greater opportunity to master the subject and to explore it in greater depth. The AP European History course follows a chronological approach emphasizing the relevance of history to today's world, with an added emphasis on developing study habits. All historical issues are examined by a multi-causal approach revolving around the following three broad themes: (1) political/diplomatic; (2) social/economic; and (3) cultural/intellectual. The course focuses on the changing views of man, God, science, and politics from the Renaissance to the present. All students enrolled must take the AP European History examination in May sponsored by the Education Testing Service. Passing this strenuous test could allow the student to receive 3 college credits.

8 AP Statistics

Course Description: Methods of summarizing data, measures of central tendency and dispersion, correlation, linear regression, confidence testing and basic probability will be taught. A graphing calculator with statistics features (TI 83/84 plus) is required. The mandatory AP Statistics exam sponsored by the Education Testing Service will be administered in May. Passing this strenuous test could allow the student to receive 3 college credits.

9 Advanced Placement Biology

Course Description: This is a college-level biology course. This course includes numerous lab experiences that mimic the real-life work of a biology laboratory. It includes topics such as molecular and cellular biology, genetics and biotechnology, heredity, biodiversity, and ecology. All students enrolled must take the AP Biology examination in May sponsored by the Education Testing Service. Passing this strenuous test could allow the student to receive 3 college credits.

10 AP Literature and Composition

Course Description: The emphasis of this course is to sharpen students' analytical and close reading skills and to develop college-level writing skills. This course focuses on a diverse world literature multi-genre curriculum. A required summer reading assignment will be evaluated at the beginning of the course. The mandatory AP English Literature exam sponsored by the Education Testing Service will be administered in May. Passing this strenuous test could allow the student to receive 3 college credits.

11 Forensics 2

This class will be a continuation of the material taught in Forensics 1. Topics will include the hands-on investigation of various types of physical evidence, including toxicology, blood spatter, and handwriting analysis. Students will analyse mock crime scenes and draw conclusions based on evidence as if they were forensic scientists.

12 Dramatics

Course Description: This course is for students interested in the art of drama. Rather than just reading plays, students will act, direct, stage, and write dialogue. Students must be able to memorize.

13 Contemporary Novel

Course Description: This course is designed to offer students access to modern voices in literature and to increase the level of enjoyment students receive from reading. They will be practicing and refining critical thinking skills while creating positive reading experiences along the way. Novels will be chosen by quality and theme.

14 Video Production II

Course Description: This course will include studio presentation and demonstrate how to successfully use studio equipment. Students will learn to use

professional video cameras, lighting equipment, a teleprompter, and a graphic generator. Students will produce videos that will be broadcast as morning announcements, cable public access, and live video for cable public access. The successful completion of this course satisfies the Numbers 2, 7, and 8 of the graduation competencies.

15 Microsoft Office I

Course Description: This course allows the students to develop skills for business and personal use through the use of the computer lab. The students will learn the fundamentals of word processing with emphasis on proper technique and speed building. Students will learn to prepare personal business letters, business letters, memorandums, reports and tables. Additionally, students will be introduced to Excel, the numeric component of the Microsoft Office suite in this course.

16 Microsoft Office II

Course Description: This course allows the student to develop skills for business through the use of the computer lab. Continued emphasis is placed on technique and building speed. Students will prepare more complex documents and reports with endnotes or footnotes tables and complete a simulation using Microsoft Office software. Excel will be integrated into assorted applications.

17 Accounting III

Course Description: This course provides students with the opportunity to develop a practical working knowledge of accounting techniques and procedures as applied in business. The course incorporates methods used in corporate accounting with hands-on accounting simulations and automated accounting procedures. Students will be prepared for entry into a variety of occupations requiring an advanced knowledge of accounting or for study of accounting at the post-secondary level. This course will cover Number 2 of the graduation competencies: a Putnam High School graduate applies

problem-solving techniques. This can be taken as a math credit.

18 Robotics

Course Description: This course will give students the opportunity to design, build, and program small, mobile robots, both autonomous and radio-controlled, using Lego pieces, tiny onboard computers, Robolab software, and a variety of sensors and actuators. Vex robotic systems may be substituted. The course will use a hands-on, problem-solving approach so that students may also explore related fundamental concepts, such as computer science, programming, mechanics, electronics, principles of engineering, and career exploration. Other disciplines engaged in this class will include creative design activities, teamwork, and problem solving. Students should also develop an understanding of how robotics is utilized today and what the future holds for emerging technology and security.

19 Creative Writing

Course Description: This course provide students with an outlet for self-expression through imaginative writing in poetry and fiction, while teaching the importance of daily writing and revision, ensuring the proper use of technique and form, and helping each student develop an individual writing style. Further, the program provides a critical audience of peers and imposes the discipline of meeting assignment deadlines such as those encountered by professionals. Creative Writing offers an authentic, disciplined study of poetry and prose. Classroom work includes individual conferences with the instructor's following close reading and analyses of students' work; instruction from the most up-to-date texts and resources on creative writing; and student discussion groups that encourage and support the creative process. At least bi-weekly, students submit original work for peer discussion and critique. They also submit polished work to literary magazines and contests.

The superintendent approved the courses for implementation for the next school year, 2008, and the following year and for the remaining courses to become part of the school curriculum over the next two years. It was the greatest one-year change in course offerings in the documented school history. I had improved my leadership abilities by using TQT as a guide to my leadership, listening reflectively to others, and trusting in the intrinsic self-motivation of other people.

As a living theory education researcher, however, I had the responsibility to look for occasions in the reform process where I contradicted my values and beliefs.

How My Values and Beliefs Were Denied in Practice during the Case Study

One of the daunting tasks of being a living theory action researcher is confronting "the shadow side" (Ford and Williamson, 2010; Ford, 2002; McNeely, 2010; Osho, 2010) of my actions as an action researcher and school leader. The shadow side refers to the unexamined part of us that is a source of both positive and negative energy.

It was difficult for me not to revel simply in success after achieving remarkable progress in reforming the curriculum and course offerings in such a short period of time. We had, after all, added a substantial number of new exciting courses in a small high school, eliminated out-dated and low need-fulfilling courses, and the courses were ones students and teachers were outwardly excited about that theoretically addressed the holistic transformational quality needs of students . Yet I asked myself:

- What could I have done better?

- Whom did I possibly upset or hurt by my decisions and actions during the reform process?

- Who most benefitted from my actions?

- How could I have improved the change process?

I considered these questions using the filter of TQT's eight quality behaviours of

C.A.P.A.C.I.T.Y., as discussed in chapter four.

I realized that I had excluded five teachers on the staff from participating in the reform effort. Each one the five teachers was highly critical of me as the principal, worked behind the scenes trying to get the vice-principal reinstated as principal and me fired, and constantly tried to thwart any efforts of change I promoted for the school. This was evidenced by e-mails they wrote to each other about finding ways to have me removed as principal, conversations I overheard them having with each other, spreading false and malicious rumours to stain my character, phone calls to board of education members complaining about my leadership and the need to replace me with the vice-principal, and speaking out in staff meetings against almost any idea I promoted regarding reforming the social and academic milieu of the school.

In plain terms, I did not like them very much either. Because of that, I didn't welcome their input for new courses. I showed little interest in listening to their ideas, and they evidently noticed my disinterest and did not participate in any part of the reform initiative to create new courses. This behaviour did not reflect the C.A.P.A.C.I.T.Y. behaviours of TQT I professed to embrace as a school leader.

This was a major misjudgement on my part as I had contradicted my values and beliefs as a humanistic school leader. There was nothing humanistic or performance-enhancing about my decision not to invite these five professionals to feel they were a part of our reform effort. I had acted in a way that I did not seek alliance with these five teachers and knew I needed to try to rectify my misjudgement. To change my behaviour I had to understand why I had made decisions and behaved in ways contradictory to my values and beliefs. I came to understand thorough daily meditation and discussions with my critical friends that I had not been using TQT to guide my behaviour and decision making when it came to my interactions with these five teachers. If I had thought about

how my behaviour was not meeting their quality needs or my own, perhaps, I would not have made decisions and acted the way I did. Because I had let my awareness wane, I acted without reflection and on impulse rather than from the tenets of TQT as my guiding philosophy. It was evident to me that I needed to be more cognizant of my level of awareness when interacting with these five teachers with whom I struggled to make an alliance and treat in an "I/You/Us" manner.

In order to improve, I recorded in my research journal interactions I had when interacting with each of the five teachers using the TQ model as a template. I recorded in what quadrant(s) of quality the other person's orientation of quality appeared to be and in what dimension(s) within the quadrant the person was oriented. I recorded which C.A.P.A.C.I.T.Y. behaviours I could use to meet best the TQ needs the teacher was trying to fulfil, and I assessed my behaviour as it related to my guiding value system. I expected this meta-cognitive routine would lead to marked improvement in my behaviour and decisions. The following illustration depicts how I used the process of looking at other people's quality needs and selected the appropriate C.A.P.A.C.I.T.Y. behaviours to foster the successful attainment, or experience, of quality:
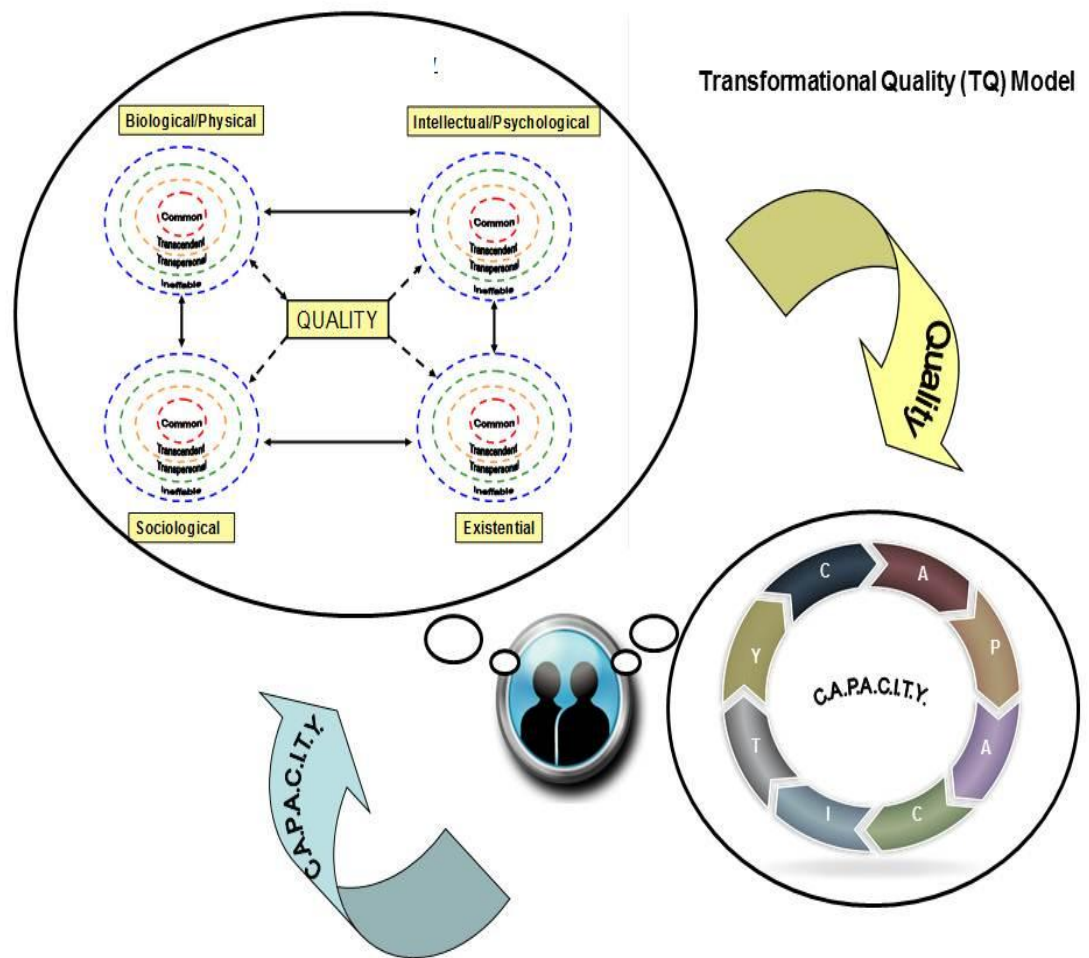
Fig. 10. The Way TQ Works in Communication

I started this improvement plan in the next phase of the action research process concerned with improving pedagogy. I invited these teachers to be involved in the process and met with each teacher regularly to have discussion and gather feedback on improvement ideas with modest success. Two of the five teachers agreed to be involved in the pedagogical reform process, described in the next section, and positively contributed to the improvement of pedagogy at the school. The other three teachers I was unable to establish any rapport with, and these teachers left the school for employment in other school districts.

CASE STUDY 2: How can I improve my life-affirming and need-fulfilling capacity to understand and model the meaning of educational quality to improve the social and academic milieu of the school through pedagogical reform?

Though I had focused on school-wide reform for curriculum reform, I believed that to do the same with pedagogical reform would be biting off more than I could chew. I planned to address critical pedagogical issues school-wide, but my focus was to concentrate on pedagogical reform for ninth grade (year 14) students. This afforded me the opportunity to deal with a manageable number of staff and students to maximise the odds of success. I believed if we could reform our pedagogical practices in ninth grade, pedagogical reform would grow organically school-wide. In essence, I was trying to create an effective "value meme" (Beck and Cowan, 1996), as discussed in chapter 2, which would spread throughout the school and have long-lasting impact. I struggled with this decision as I saw a desperate need for whole-scale pedagogical reform. Yet, to be successful, I sensed that we needed to start small and build on success incrementally. The reason I had this sense was based on the school's history of low levels of student academic success, high levels of serious student discipline problems, and a teaching faculty that mostly relied on lecture as the primary pedagogical approach.

I created a vision plan of how we could enact successful school reform of the ninth grade learning experience and program through the development of nine tenets I based on a TQT explanatory model and the C.A.P.A.CI.T.Y model.

1 Need-fulfilling instruction

I developed a unified understanding between staff of what was meant by the concept of "need-fulfilling." I influenced teachers though dialogue in advisory meetings to accept that student needs are based on the concepts of love, power, fun, freedom, and survival (Glasser, 1998). Having established this unified understanding, we developed

pedagogical approaches that required evidence students' various basic needs were being successfully met in daily lessons and in our inter-personal relationships with students.

2 Effective rapport with students

I firmly believed that, unless we improved our rapport with students, all of our effort for improvement would be for naught. There was a sense of disconnect, I perceived, when I conducted classroom observations between students and teachers in most classroom learning environments. Teachers often seemed frustrated and exhausted in dealing with rampant classroom misbehaviour. My classroom observations over a six-month period, which included at least three classroom observations per day, showed on average thirty per cent of students were routinely off task. Furthermore, on average, ten per cent of students in class were seriously disruptive of the educational process. I saw this data as evidence that we needed to be more conscious of our level of rapport and needed to develop our skills in building rapport.

3 Demonstrating an "I-You/We" rather than an "I-It" approach to teaching students

Improving rapport was a critical goal of the action plan to improve pedagogy, but it was equally important to me that we did so in the mind-set of caring relationships of reflective listening and acting. The vision I had for our school community as the school leader was not to build rapport for the purposes of manipulation, but to build rapport with other people because we intended to be in communion with other people with respect and a dedication to care for each other's well-being (Noddings, 2005, 2002, 1995). I viewed this as an ideal to strive for, though perhaps something we would never be able to attain completely. I know myself as a flawed human being because I strive for this ideal in my everyday life and find I fail to live up to this idea routinely. I usually fail at this ideal when dealing with people I dislike, people who have wronged me or

frustrated me. This is not a lot of people, but it is enough to know I need to work harder as a leader to role model continuity between my values and beliefs and my decisions and actions.

My personal perspective at that time was, "What use would it be to have students who all get an A and do not misbehave only to have them turn into selfish, violent, uncaring, and mean-spirited adult community members?" My first and foremost goal as a humanistic leader was that I influenced the development of healthy young men and women. This did not mean I considered intellectual development and knowledge acquisition as a lesser value. I saw them as inextricably intertwined.

Working with an educational consultant hired from a state university whose expertise was in team building and constructivist student learning and who took on the role of a critical friend, I engaged in an initial assessment of the team's use of "I-You/We" and "I-It" approaches to teaching and learning and developed a strategic plan to improve pedagogy, interpersonal relationships, curriculum, assessment, and learning/knowledge performance. We assessed our level of improvement bi-weekly at team meetings and retained a running record of our success toward our goal of being "I-You/We" teachers with me as the school leader.

4   Addressing multiple intelligences and using multiple teaching strategies each lesson

It was common pedagogical practice at PHS for teachers to use one teaching strategy for a forty-five minute class meeting: mildly interactive teacher lecture. Commonly, the teacher would talk, and students were required to take notes while they sat at desks arranged in straight rows. Student participation consisted of a teacher's asking a question and asking students to raise their hand to be called on for an answer. It was a textbook example of a school's using a banking approach (Freire, 1970b) to

education, where teachers are depositors of knowledge and students receptacles for the knowledge: a system of education that prizes student passivity.

I focused on influencing teachers to be reflective teachers who met the diverse quality needs of their students. I encouraged teachers to keep professional journals and to keep records of evidence their instruction was meeting the multiple intelligence (Gardner, 2000) and basic needs (Glasser, 1998) of students. We used our team time for an hour once a week to discuss how we were being successful and how we could improve. We focused on using at least three different three instructional strategies per 45-minute classroom lesson.

5   Pursuing TQ in the classroom

I aimed to influence staff to be aware of how their lessons holistically addressed or ignored TQ. The action plan included mapping how teachers were addressing TQ learning with students. The map was created by recording data each week from teachers about their teaching plans, results of the plan, and their perceptions of students' experiences of the lessons based on student feedback.

6   Being aware of and taking advantage of teachable moments

From personal experience as a classroom teacher and observations as a school leader, I believe the most powerful and effective moments in teaching often come from teachable moments. I define such a moment (Branstetter, 2010; Hyun, 2006) as those times in the classroom when a teacher recognises a spontaneously emerging classroom learning opportunity to address student learning needs about a meaningful issue or topic.

Unfortunately, my experience as an administrator has shown me that many times teachers do not take advantage of teachable moments because they want to stay on track to meet predetermined instructional goal(s) and meet their predetermined objectives for their classroom period.

At PHS, I witnessed teachable moments ignored often during my classroom observations. I wanted to influence teachers to raise their awareness of when teachable moments arose and take advantage of the opportunities. I discussed with teachers the importance of being aware of teachable moments and to bolster teacher confidence that I, as the principal, perceived these learning opportunities as critically important. I asked teachers on a weekly basis if they had teachable moments and to share them with me and the rest of the team. My expectation was that by bringing the concept of teachable moments to the forefront of teachers' consciousness they would improve their awareness of such moments and take advantage of them when they arose (Havighurst, 1957).

7 Being authentic

At PHS there were many teachers who seemed to demonstrate inauthenticity in their character while in the classroom. I saw that some teachers were humorous, pleasant, good listeners, and collaborative with other teachers and staff in the building. Yet, when the same teachers worked with students in the classroom, they rarely laughed, were often abrasive and impatient, talked over students, and used a teacher-centric approach to learning almost exclusively. We had hired teachers because we believed in their skills, yet we also hired them for the character, values, and beliefs.

Working with an educational consultant, we worked in concert with teachers and support staff of the Freshman Academy so their personality and character flowed in their teaching. I asked teachers to observe each other so as to offer feedback on the level of authenticity experienced they saw in the lesson they saw. Through individual teacher meetings and team meetings, I visited this topic often in our routine discussions and gathered data from teachers and the consultant on their observations. We were able to assess our success in achieving this through a strategy of having each teacher on the team act as a critical friend for another teacher on the team. The critical friend

discussions were often moderated by the school psychologist and the university consultant so as to ensure communication was respectful and clear. This strategy proved to be invaluable as the general social milieu of the team improved each week over the span of the first quarter (9/08-11/08) of the school year in 2008. This was evidenced by the teachers' eating lunch together in groups, more laughing and smiling during team meetings, and positive affirmations often heard from one teacher to another about their ability and skills.

When we first met as a team for the last weeks of August 2008 until mid-September 2008, there was little laughing, smiling, or light-hearted banter. Fortunately, a favourable front-page article in a state newspaper featured a photo of one of our teachers working with students and praising the work of the teachers. This validated for them that all their hard work and dedication were recognised and validated by students who were quoted in the article about how much they felt cared for and respected. The key aspect of the article was the praise for teachers with little mention me as principal, which I asked the reporter to do. This small gesture I believe reinforced my dedication not to seek the limelight and my appreciation for their effort and work.

8   Using relevant and meaningful approaches to gaining knowledge and skills

Knowing that as human beings we retain learning that is relevant and meaningful to us and often discard information that is not, I thought it obvious that we had to take this into account any time we planned a learning experience. I required teachers to explain how the lessons they taught were relevant and meaningful to the lives of students. The expectation was that there would be improvement in the relevancy and meaningfulness of student learning experiences because of our weekly monitoring of lessons and planning for improvement (Ofsted, 2006) in meeting the quality needs of

students.

9 Teaching in a manner that promotes the development of healthy young men and women

I wanted the staff to reflect on their teaching and interaction with students and ask themselves, "How have I promoted the development of healthy young men and women?" I passionately believed if we kept this question in the forefront of our consciousness, it would help us improve as caring adults, allow us to meet the quality needs of students more effectively, and enhance student performance.

Action Plan in Praxis for a Freshman Academy: A Prologue and Ending

It was evident to me that we needed to change the ways and means by which we educated our freshman students. In the three years prior to my assuming the principalship of the school, 49 per cent of freshman students had failed at least one class and a consistently high number of students did not get promoted to the next year of high school as sophomores. The transition from middle school to high school was a stressful and difficult experience for many students. The middle school had more support systems in place, stressed competition less by not ranking students, and organised students heterogeneously for learning. A student in middle school did not even need to pass all of his or her classes to be promoted to high school. Additionally, middle school students from our district were used to project-based learning. This was not the case with PHS learning experiences. Students were thrust into a school environment with few support systems and a highly competitive attitude where students were ranked against each other. Classes were groups by perceived ability level into four categories of learning groups (from perceived smartest and most talented to least intelligent and least talented). Finally, if a student did not pass the requisite classes they did not graduate. Learning at the high school was rarely project-based; rather, it was based on book

learning, lectures, and note taking for the most part.

I sought to gain support for redesigning the way we educated incoming freshman. I had worked as a vice principal for six years at another high school in the state, and one of my responsibilities was to develop and supervise ninth grade teachers and students who were part of a Freshman Academy that did some of the reforms I aimed at achieving at PHS. Freshman Academy was a growing phenomenon in American high schools focused on better meeting the needs of transitioning high school students.

The High Schools That Work (HSTW) initiative from the Southern Regional Education Board in 2007 describes the Freshmen Academy:

- Organize teachers into a ninth-grade academy with heterogeneous students. No ninth-grade academy should have only at-risk students. Every academy should have a full range of students.

- Appoint one instructional leader to assist the ninth-grade teams in practicing instructional planning, examining the level of teacher assignments and student work, and getting common agreements on end-of-grading-period exams and rubrics.

- Provide teachers with planning time at least weekly so they can work together to plan lessons and identify the unique needs of students.

- Ensure the student-to-teacher ratio in the ninth grade is no higher (and preferably lower) than any other grade level in high school.

- Encourage the best teachers to teach ninth-grade courses and become teacher leaders in planning a positive learning experience for students. (South Regional Education Board, 2007)

- More than 1,200 HSTW sites in 31 states are using the framework of

HSTW Goals and Key Practices to raise student achievement. (Southern

Regional Education Board, 2007).

I intended to take to heart all of the recommendations by the HSTW in our

development of a Freshman Academy because it provided me a respected and

established external resource to validate the pedagogical and curriculum reforms I

promoted. Politically, I considered it important to have external sources to validate for

the local community and board of education that major school reform was necessary.

The most controversial of the recommendations in the state in which I worked, and

across the United States in general, was the grouping of students heterogeneously. It

was unusual for an American high school to group students heterogeneously for

instruction in their "core" classes of English, math, science, and social studies.

American high schools traditionally segregate students into different levels of perceived

ability and intelligence. This segregation of students by perceived intelligence is called

"tracking." The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2006) website

summarizes how tracking works and when it first took hold in American public

secondary schools:

> The term tracking refers to a method used by many secondary schools to group
>
> students according to their perceived ability, IQ, or achievement levels. Students
>
> are placed in high, middle, or low tracks in an effort to provide them with a level
>
> of curriculum and instruction that is appropriate to their needs. The practice of
>
> tracking began in the 1930s and has been the subject of intense controversy in
>
> the past 20 years.

PHS had four levels of tracked classes: advanced placement (AP), honours,

college preparation, and skills. High school in that state usually had four to five

different levels of tracked classes. The following are the descriptions of the tracked

221

class levels at PHS used to group students as outlined in the school's 2006 handbook.

AP Level: Courses offered at this level are college Advanced Placement and are designed for the gifted student who is highly motivated and demonstrates a high degree of interest in the subject area. Offered to juniors and seniors who enrol in Advanced Placement courses. The May Advanced Placement examination must be taken. College credit may be obtained based on the exam grade.

Honours Level: Courses offered at this level are designed for the above average student with a high degree of interest and a willingness to study in the subject area.

College Prep Level: Courses offered at this level are designed for the average student who demonstrates an interest in the subject area.

Skills Level: Courses offered at this level are designed to meet the needs of students who require additional support or skills in a specific subject area. Standardized test scores and previous grades will also be used to determine appropriate levels.

> *Pupils can expect homework assignments daily regardless of course level.*

To complement the tracking program in high schools, there is customarily a student ranking system to delineate who is the best learner to who is the least capable learner. This information is most often shared with a college or university when a high school senior applies for admission or with prospective employers if the information is requested. As a humanist and critical theorist, I was disturbed that we were promoting an elitist and exclusionary class system of education. This prejudicial class system had been with the school system for as long as anyone could remember, and changing it

would be both difficult and professionally risky as it challenged a well-entrenched *status quo*. Through our discussions, debates, and dialogues together over the five months between August of 2006 and January of 2007, the majority of the teaching staff agreed to transform the freshman year of high school education into heterogeneous groups for teaching and learning. I reminded staff each day we were going to be successful and together we could improve drastically the social and academic milieu of the freshman year learning experience. My confidence came from my passionate belief that we could, together, overcome almost any challenge we were faced. I recognised wisdom in the words written by Tom Gregory (2001)

> I see most of the apparently formidable challenge to structure and change in education as illusionary. Many obstacles—even some scary ones— tend to evaporate when we muster the courage to push them aside. Most of the real obstacles to change are not "out there" but inside us. We each have own collection of bogeymen who we're afraid to confront. (qtd. in Blankstein 9)

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) professed in its "Guiding Principles" (2007) the need to phase out tracking in secondary schools: "NASSP believes that, while tracking was originally intended for practical pedagogical purposes, its unintended consequences make it an obsolete practice in the context of high expectations for all" (*http://www.principals.org/Content.aspx?topic=53615, p.1*).

I sought to suggest to the teaching staff that to look at student grouping for learning through the lens of who can best memorize and regurgitate information was to miss the point of that transformational quality learning is concerned with students learning holistically. By supporting the tracking of students, we were bestowing on high-tracked students higher social status then students assigned low level tracked

classes because of greater recognition by teachers and school administration (Oakes and Lipton, 1992; Oakes, 1985; Rosenbaum, 1980).

I decided we would be faithful to NASSP recommendations for successfully implementing ninth grade heterogeneous classes. I decided to adopt their recommendation for two reasons. First, the recommendations were in alignment with my stated vision for school culture reform. Secondly, it provided the reform effort support from arguably the most recognized and respected professional organization for principals in the United States, which made it all the more reason I found it odd so few schools in the country ignored the recommendations. NASSP states in their mission statement they are "the pre-eminent organization of and national voice for principals, assistant principals, and aspiring school leaders from across the United States and more than 45 countries around the world. The mission of NASSP is to promote excellence in school leadership" (*http://www.principals.org/Content/158/10-375EX_NASSPprofile_web.pdf*).

The NASSP recommendations, which were adopted July 13, 2006, for principals were as follows:

- Create a culture of high expectations for all students. Rather than assuming that only some students need preparation for post-secondary education, counsel all students for the possibility that they will seek higher education at some point in their lives.

- Provide a safe and personalized learning environment for each student.

- Provide early intervention strategies in reading/language arts, math and other core areas for students achieving below grade level.

- Identify a set of essential learning in which students must demonstrate competency in order to move to the next level.

● Provide open enrolment for academically rigorous programs such as International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced Placement (AP) and honours classes, and provide tutoring and other instructional support to enhance chances for success.

● Provide focused professional development for teachers to enable them to acquire the skills and dispositions needed in de-tracked schools. These include high expectations for all, differentiated instruction, cooperative learning, and complex instruction.

● Organize students in heterogeneous learning groups; diversity can help students learn from each other.

● Reorganize the traditional department structure in order to integrate the school's curriculum to the extent possible.

● Involve families at an early stage in planning and implementing heterogeneous groups. Educate families about alternatives to tracking by inviting them to observe classes, reporting results during the phase in state. Reassure parents who oppose detracking by showing how their children will also benefit from the changes.

● Provide additional time for struggling students. Interventions designed to remediate students who score two to three years below grade level in certain disciplines and in reading should not be construed as tracking. These students need immediate, intensive accelerated instruction in the form of additional time. *(http://www.principals.org/Content.aspx?topic=53615) National Association of Secondary School Principals™*

After five months of daily discussions through September 2007-January 2008, there was broad-based support from the teaching staff to develop and implement a

modified Freshman Academy for the next school year. Such an academy design would meet the unique quality needs of our student population. We put together a Freshman Academy teaching team that included five teachers who volunteered for the position and the school psychologist, two guidance counsellors, and me. I secured the services of a team-building consultant from a state university to meet with us bi-monthly to help us strategically plan and act as our critical friend during the reform process.

The main features of the Freshman Academy that we aligned with the recommendations of NASSP and with TQT were drastically different from past practices of educating ninth grade students at PHS. The following sections outline how, by using TQT as a meta-model to influence quality humanistic reform of the academic and social milieu of the freshman year of education and following the recommendation of NASSP, we were collaboratively able to create a personalised learning program for all ninth grade students through the development of a unique Freshman Academy.

Create a culture of high expectations

We officially adopted the slogan "failure is not an option" as our mantra. We read Blankstein's *Failure is Not an Option* (2004), discussed the merits of the book's philosophy, and agreed this would be a powerful mantra to help create a culture of high expectations for all students. The teaching staff and I hoped to influence a culture of high expectation based on tapping into students' self-motivation. My goal was for us to avoid using punishments, rewards, and fierce competition as motivational tools for learning. These tools, from a humanistic perspective, unnecessarily fetter student freedom and ability to act authentically. I used my leadership influence with staff to seek pragmatic ways to spark motivation in students though focusing on meeting students' quality needs holistically though awareness of transformational quality in our planning and guiding of education experience with students and each other.

The academy teaching staff made a commitment consciously to avoid manipulative motivational tools and to work together as a team to help students be successful by personalising the teaching and learning process. This required teachers' knowing a student's multiple intelligence strengths and designing learning accordingly, empowering students to be self-directed learners and being effective listeners in the classroom while showing patience and care.

Provide a safe and personalized learning environment for each student

In order to meet this recommendation from the NASSP, we conducted routine grade-wide meetings with all staff and students to address safety concerns, share our plan to remedy issues successfully, and ask students for feedback on what we could improve. We conducted some meetings to gather information, others to plan out a course of action, and some meetings to evaluate how our plans for safety were working and what improvements might be needed.

We believed the best way to personalise the learning environment for students was to meet with each student during the first semester to listen to their ideas and feedback on how best to meet their personal learning needs. Meetings occurred either with one teacher or with the whole team. We wanted to show students we cared and were listening, and this approach reinforced our commitment that we deeply cared about maximising every student's capability to experience learning success and feel safe in the school.

Provide early intervention strategies in reading/language arts, math, and other core areas for students achieving below grade level

We created a learning period each day called an Achievement Workshop. This period consisted of forty-five minutes where ninth grade students worked collaboratively with teachers from whom they needed to receive additional instruction and support. This

time period was used to improve our rapport with students, gain clearer insight into how they learn best, improve students' ability for success, and allow time to receive and provide feedback on the success or need for improvement in the teaching/learning process.

The Achievement Workshop concept replaced the previous period, which had been a study hall. Previously, students would attend a study hall where the expectations was that students would work on homework and remain silent while teachers corrected papers and worked on lesson plans at their desk. There was little teacher-student interaction, except when teachers were dealing with misbehaviour. The previous study hall period resulted in more disciplinary issues than any other class in the school.

During one hour-long team meeting a week, teachers made a commitment to use the time exclusively to identify and develop action plans to help students who were struggling. The action plans would be reviewed on a weekly basis and alterations made as the need arose. We would invite parents in to attend the meetings when the strategic plans were developed to solicit input on how we could better meet their child's needs and secure their support to help their child.

Identify a set of essential learning in which students must demonstrate competency in order to move to the next level

Teachers agreed that each course needed clearly defined benchmarks to help students understand what quality learning and learning products "look, feel, and sound like." We agreed as an academy team that formative assessments were an essential part of both planning personalized learning and assessing the competency of that learning (Black and William, 1998; Shavelson, 2003). Boston (2002) wrote:

> ...the goal of formative assessment is to gain an understanding of what students know (and don't know) in order to make responsive changes in teaching and learning, techniques such as teacher observation and classroom discussion have an

important place alongside analysis of tests and homework. (p.2)

We planned to review with each other as a team each week who was conducting formative assessments, what the assessments looked like, and how formative assessments contributed to the success or failure of students. Formative assessments were reviewed by the entire team, and feedback was provided by team members on the strengths and weaknesses they perceived in the assessment. All formative assessments were collected and stored in a team binder as a library of sorts that could be consulted for ideas. As importantly, we wanted students to interpret formative assessments as personalised feedback. We wanted to eliminate the false notion that formative assessments were a "grade" or a form of punishment (Tunstall, 1996).

One of our goals was to decrease the achievement gap between successful students and students who were struggling by raising the achievement of struggling students. We planned on seeking a reading and math specialist for the academy who could work throughout the school day helping struggling students gain the skills and competencies necessary to be successful in their learning. We felt as an academy staff that approaching the teaching/learning process from an interdisciplinary approach maximised student potential for success. Instead of being subject area department-focused, as was the custom, our team coordinated academic subject co-teaching schemes, developed interdisciplinary curricula, and created assessments that counted for two or more classes simultaneously.

It is important to note the amount of additional work the Freshman Academy teachers were required to do for the learning program to be successful. Teachers worked voluntarily past their contract hours as outlined by the teacher's union, spent time during their vacations learning new material and preparing lessons and assessments, and spent more time meeting with parents and students than their colleagues who were not

working in the Freshman Academy. Their willingness to work beyond expectations and with a positive and affirming attitude was inspirational to me as the school leader and set a tone of high expectations for other staff in the school.

Provide open enrolment for academically rigorous programs such as advanced placement (AP) and honours classes and provide tutoring and other instructional support to enhance chances for success

In following this recommendation, we made a decision as a staff advisory to allow any student to be eligible for advanced placement (AP) courses. Previously, a student had to meet minimum grade requirements in selected courses and secure a teacher recommendation to be eligible to take an AP class. Though academy students were not eligible for AP classes, we decided to foster an interest in AP classes in the ninth grade. When a student showed interest in taking an AP course in the future, we personalised that student's education program to help him or her be prepared for success. Evidenced showed that even when students did not perform well in an AP class, the exposure to the higher level of learning improved their chance of earning a college degree (Adelman, 1999). We planned on offering preliminary AP classes in the academy for the program's following year. We would have liked to institute the pre-AP course immediately, but we lacked the training, materials, and financial support needed to implement the courses successfully.

In order to be prepared to offer pre-AP classes in the near future, I worked with consultants who helped us manage the advanced placement programs to organize our curricula and prepare teacher training to make pre-AP courses at the ninth grade available to students in the following school year of 2009.

Provide focused professional development for teachers to enable them to acquire the skills and dispositions needed in detracked schools. These include high expectations for all, differentiated instruction, cooperative learning, and complex instruction.

In order to ensure academy teachers were provided with transformational quality professional development, I petitioned the district superintendent to have a full-time consultant available to our academy teachers. I wanted the consultant to work with our teachers in the academy on a regular basis to help them with curriculum and lesson development and in building a need-fulfilling learning culture in the academy. Fortunately, the superintendent was a caring and intelligent woman who saw the need for us as an administration to support the needs of the academy teachers. I secured approval for us to have a consultant from a state university to be available to our teachers on a daily basis for advice, assistance, brainstorming, and encouraging creativity and emotional resiliency in the face of adversity. This consultant came to our school a minimum of twice a month, and we could contact her daily via phone or e-mail to work with teachers as a group and individually to help us in our quest to meet student needs holistically.

The use of a consultant proved to be an invaluable help to us in creating a humanistic and vibrant learning culture in the academy. She was an excellent listener and demonstrated a deep concern for helping us build a humanistic learning culture focused on transformational quality learning. She acted as a critical friend who shared feedback and observations about our pedagogy and our successes and areas in need of improvement to address students' transformational quality needs.

Organize students in heterogeneous learning groups; diversity can help students learn from each other

I believe this was most important reform we made for the ninth grade learning

experience. From kindergarten or first grade (ages: 5-6) to eighth grade (ages 13-14) students are used to being heterogeneously grouped for learning. Students transitioning from the eighth grade to the high school were used to being in classes with students of varying degrees of intellect, personalities, disabilities, and willingness to work. In most American high schools, students were immersed for the first time in a rigid and all-pervasive elitist class system. There were classes for "smart" students, classes for "average" students, and classes for "slow" students.

Such labels are not advertised, yet they clearly exist in a tracking approach to student grouping for instruction. The evidence that there is a class system can be seen by looking at PHS's student handbook (2006), discussed earlier in this chapter, and course guide, which is typical of American public high schools. Both the school's handbook and course guide delineate for students and parents the different levels of classes a student is assigned. The higher the level of class, the more "weight" and respect the class has from teachers and the school system's assessment of learning (Education Trust, 2004; Gramsci, 1971). For instance, if a student earned a grade of 75 per cent for a grade in a high level class it is "weighted" as being equal to earning an 85 per cent in the next lower class and a 95 per cent grade at the lowest level. The purpose of "weighting" classes was for the purpose of ranking students against each other. For instance, if one student received a ninety per cent grade for a class in a high level class and another student received a ninety per cent mark for the quarter in an average level class there was system in place to rank which student was "better." Since both have the same marks for their respective level classes, from a ranking perspective, the higher level student is provided more points toward the ranking system. This results in the higher level student's being ranked notably higher than the lower level student even though they both have identical grades in their respective classes.

In sharing the idea of the tenets of TQT with staff members as the meta-model of my educational philosophy, I aimed to use my influence to illuminate for staff the oppressiveness of this practice of ranking students and segregating students by perceived intelligence level as socially unjust. After creating and implementing a heterogeneously grouped ninth grade academy, I hoped to develop and implement a similar model in the sophomore year. The academy design helped us optimise students' ability to meet their transformational quality needs with greater depth and breadth than did the *status quo* practice of education quality. Yet I received a notable number of comments from staff who echoed the words of Nancy Brisson, an English teacher at Naples High School in Florida, "My biggest concern was that they were going to phase it in. So, this year we have a freshman academy and next year we have a sophomore academy….But that is not going to happen. They must assimilate. This is just to help them acclimate to the increased rigor of high school" (Albers, 2010).

There was a core cadre of teachers who believed that students must learn to assimilate and "acclimate to the increased rigor of high school." This cadre of teachers was hesitant to implement the Freshman Academy model, yet saw the majority of teachers were in favour of it and agreed to support the initiatives with hesitations. As for creating a similar sophomore academy, there was much less buying in. Fifteen of the 38 teachers who supported the Freshman Academy had reservations about a sophomore model of an academy for teaching and learning.

At Palmetto Ridge High School in Florida, Principal Mary Murray had the same views for why extending the heterogeneous academy design was necessary beyond simply reforming the freshman year learning experience:

"We figured that if we can support them in ninth grade and they can be successful, why not support them in 10th grade and by the time they are

233

delivered to 11th grade, they are so close to graduation they can taste it," Murray said.

"We are supporting kids," Murray said. "We are making sure none slip through the cracks. And if we can help them through their first two years develop good study habits and know what's expected of them, then they will emerge and go into 11th grade on track toward graduation and their plans beyond"...Murray said the goal of the sophomore academy is ultimately to improve student achievement... [and] doesn't see the addition of the sophomore academy as babying her students. (Albers, 2010b)

I was disturbed by the fact that such a need-fulfilling and responsive education model of teaching/learning such as Freshman Academy most often was only considered in American high schools as a learning model relevant for first-year students (and there was a paltry number of American high schools that even implemented a Freshman Academy-like program). Based on my professional experience, I believe the main reason for not extending this model of education seems to be based on a simple argument: students need to assimilate and acclimatise themselves to an environment where they are supposed to compete fiercely with each other for better rank and attention of the adults in the building and be separated from each other for instruction based on perceived intelligence, ability, and talent and to earn rewards and honours. After all, that is the *status quo* way American high schools most often operate

Much to my surprise, support for the Sophomore Academy and making the school heterogeneous grew organically without much help on my part as principal because of the success of the Freshman Academy in its first few months of implementation. The teachers of the Freshman Academy spread the word throughout the school and local community that it was a satisfying and exciting model in which to

teach. Teachers began to speak about overturning the *status quo* and making the school more heterogeneous in student groupings for learning. Student feedback supported the idea that the Academy model was a preferable way to learn. The teacher advisory group I met with bi-weekly informed me they felt comfortable with making all core classes heterogeneous for freshman and sophomores in all courses, except for advanced placement courses, for the following school year of 2009.

It is hard to prove conclusively that the discussion I initiated about meeting student transformational quality needs (as defined by TQT) with greater depth and breadth influenced PHS staff's willingness to challenge the *status quo* by implementing heterogeneous classes in the first two years of high school education. Rarely did anyone state it was because of something I said or did directly. It is reasonable to conclude that my initiation of the conversation about challenging the *status quo*, nurturing an environment of open dialogue about reforming school practice, and empowering teachers to be self-directed influenced the majority of teachers in our school to change and improve greatly both the methods and means by which they had been educating students. We had agreed as a school faculty to create a system of education whereby first-year students could settle into the high school learning culture by knowing they had two years of learning in heterogeneous classes not ranked against each other. We set up a learning design where teachers showed care for their students, taught in an interdisciplinary manner, and personalised learning to meet best students' quality learning needs.

Reorganize the traditional department structure in order to integrate the school's curriculum to the fullest extent possible

In order to know how best to address this recommendation, I met with teachers individually and in groups to gain an understanding of how we could restructure the

departments of the high school to meet the needs of our "new" interdisciplinary approach to learning better. The Freshman Academy teachers were united in their belief that they needed to have common planning time worked into the daily school schedule to make interdisciplinary learning a reality. By having common planning time, the academy teachers would be afforded the opportunity on a daily basis to look for interdisciplinary connections between the themes of learning in each of the different subject areas they taught. Common planning time allowed teachers to have daily discussion about how we were meeting students' transformational quality needs and how we could improve our pedagogy.

I listened to what teachers stated they felt they needed and worked with the guidance department to create a school schedule that allowed academy teachers common planning time for forty-five minutes per day. Teachers shared a concern that meeting each day as an interdisciplinary team precluded them from meeting often with subject department colleagues to receive feedback on their practice and to brainstorm ideas with fellow subject area teachers in education planning. It was a valid concern, but I believed meeting as an interdisciplinary team would have a more direct impact on the level of quality education we were offering students. In order to meet teachers' stated needs, I created opportunities for subject area-specific teachers to meet once a month to work together and talk about issues of instruction and curriculum within their subject-specific areas of expertise. Admittedly, this was a minimum amount of time to meet, but with the new schedule it was not possible for us to schedule interdisciplinary common planning time and subject-specific teacher common planning time on a daily basis. The key to our successful reform of pedagogy was that teachers became used to working in interdisciplinary teams and that this practice became a routine.

The advantage of teachers' being organised into interdisciplinary teams was the coordination of school learning so achievement in one class simultaneously equated to achievement in another subject area. The objections may arise that surely this is potential achievement and one cannot guarantee results will be the same among multiple classes. The fact of the matter is that it did help ensure similar learning and achievement occurred between the different classes. Assessment of learning in one class was harmonious with learning in another class because of the cooperation between teachers of different subject matters to create interdisciplinary curriculum and lesson plans. This is testimony to the degree of interdisciplinary planning and development of learning assessments the teachers created so as to demonstrate the holonomic nature of learning and to illustrate that the reductionist thinking of separating one subject from another is often both artificial and inauthentic in a holistic learning environment. Furthermore, it allowed us to coordinate proactive strategies to help struggling students because we met daily to discuss the transformational quality needs of individual students in our unique learning community and how we could improve meeting student needs.

Involve families at an early stage in planning and implementing heterogeneous groups. Educate families about alternatives to tracking by inviting them to observe classes, reporting results during the phase in state. Reassure parents who oppose detracking by showing how their children will also benefit from the changes.

I viewed it as critical from a TQT orientation toward quality that, as the school leader, I make a concentrated effort to educate parents about why and how we were implementing heterogeneous learning groups for students in the Freshman Academy. I scheduled open house parent meetings for parents to come learn about the new Freshman Academy and how heterogeneous learning would improve the depth and

breadth by which their son's and/or daughter's quality education needs would be met. The meetings were organized so as to allow time for parents to give feedback and ask questions. I also conducted a presentation for the community at a public meeting of the board of education to report on the progress of the academy after the first grading period of the school year.

As for parents who passionately opposed de-tracking and having a heterogeneous learning environment, I had less success. The parents of students who were considered ranked in the top twenty in their class from eighth grade (based on their assessment) quite plainly hated the idea. It did not seem to matter how much research and literature supported what we were doing. Each of the parents of top-ranked eighth grade learners were dismayed with the idea their child would be sharing a classroom with students who were, in their estimation, less intelligent, skilled, motivated, and well-behaved.

I made sure that the detractors of our program felt listened to and respected; however, I would not deviate from the path we had set collaboratively as a school administration and staff. Unfortunately, high levels of unrest in the local community and by the influential board of education put my position as principal in serious jeopardy, causing high levels of what Jack Whitehead calls "narrative wreckage" (Whitehead, 2008). I needed to re-channel negative energy into life-affirming energy for the betterment of myself and the people I served as principal of PHS.

Provide additional time for struggling students. Interventions designed to remediate students who score two to three years below grade level in certain disciplines and in reading should not be construed as tracking. These students need immediate, intensive, accelerated instruction in the form of additional time.

As an academy team we did not look at the definition of struggling students'

achievements based on student grades and scores on state-mandated academic standardised test scores. We looked at students who demonstrated evidence of not having met their transformational quality needs holistically. We designed the academy so that, once a week during common planning time, teachers looked for students who were struggling to experience quality in certain quadrants and dimensions in their learning experiences. Working with school guidance counsellors and the school psychologist, we planned how we could better meet the transformational quality needs of each student. After formulating an initial strategy, we invited struggling students to meet with us and asked for, and offered, recommendations for how we could support him or her to experience quality more regularly and with greater depth and breadth.

Seeking approval for implementation of the Freshman Academy and heterogeneous classes

The superintendent provided unwavering support for all the new course offerings and the Freshman Academy. She coordinated meetings for the teachers and me to present our new ninth grade learning plan to the board of education, or what is referred to in England as the board of Governors. The action plan had gone remarkably well. As a learning community we had collaboratively created a practical plan for major reform of our school culture. The next step of the action plan was to set criteria and a course of action to gain support from the board of education. This was a formidable challenge as the board of education had proven itself consistent in acceptance of the *status quo* and resistant to change. The Board did not have the experience of spending five months of intense discussion with us that led the formation of a Freshman Academy and an acceptance of homogeneity as a culture norm for instruction. None of the board members had ever worked in a public school, and the information they based their decision on, most of the time, came from second- and third-hand accounts. I

decided it was critical that the board members get a first-person perspective and visit a school that had a successful Freshman Academy similar to how we had designed our program.

I scheduled a school visit for the board members and interested staff to take a field trip to a high school that had successfully implemented a Freshman Academy with heterogeneous classes' being a norm for the first two years of high school. There was only one high school in our area of the state that had a Freshman Academy that embraced heterogeneous classes. In the state I identified only three high schools that were embracing heterogeneous learning. Kindly, the principal of the school was willing to host us at his school and show us how the school operated. He invited us to spend a half-day at his school with full access to classes so we could get a first-hand account of how learning in a heterogeneous group worked. We were allowed to interact with students and teachers to ask questions and seek clarification.

All the teachers and staff interested in working with the academy and four other teachers interested in heterogeneous classes agreed to visit Hyrum High. Out of the nine board of education members invited, only two accepted the invitation to visit. When the visit was over, everyone was excited about what they saw except the board of education members. When I asked our staff what their impressions of the visit were, they uniformly replied (Research Journal 11/3/08) that they were impressed by the level of involvement students had in their learning, the high energy, and how enthusiastic the teachers were in the school. The staff was energized to bring a similar model of learning to our school. Asking the two board members the same question, the answers were markedly different. Their impression was that Hyrum was a school from a wealthy community, and we were from a poor community. They agreed that what they saw was great but wouldn't work at PHS because of financial constraints and a student

population that would not, in their opinion, do well with heterogeneously grouped classes because of behaviour issues, a lower level of intelligent students, and less skilled teachers (board of education Interviews 14/5/08). The verdict was they did not think this was a good idea for education at PHS.

I reflected on my conversation with the board members at the end of the site visit. I looked for what they were saying about their values and beliefs. I wrote in my journal,

"I can't believe Kerry told me the school was great but not great for us. Why? She said they are a wealthy district and we are poor. The kids at this school are well behaved and responsible and our kids are not. They have a highly skilled teaching staff and we don't. The other guy was miserable. He started the day off with what we wanted to do costs too much money and ended the day with same mantra. His idea of too much money is ANY MONEY! He also echoed Kerry's comments about our town being poor and our students being poorly behaved and not as smart as the students at Hyrum. I never saw him smile and that says a lot considering what an awesome place Hyrum was. I left excited and energized, and they left morose. (Research Journal 14/5/08)

I spoke with the superintendent the next day about how the visit was a great success for the teachers and was not for the board members. The superintendent told me that all plans for the new courses, the heterogeneous grouping, and the Freshman Academy were to go forward as planned and she would deal with the board of education. She explained to me that the school superintendent has the power to make instructional decisions and can pilot curricula and programs without securing board of education approval. She explained that she had hoped we could win over the board and we would go forward because it was in the best interest of students.

Summer vacation was starting one month after we decided we were implementing the Freshman Academy with the superintendent's permission, and the new school year with all our reform efforts was to start in three months. This was an extremely tight time line. I met with the teachers and laid out the reality of our situation. I asked one question: "How are we going to get our plans up and running by the beginning of the next school year?" As I had hoped, teachers stated they would need to work hard in the summer writing curriculum, securing necessary learning materials, and receiving extra training. By the beginning of the next school year, the Freshman Academy was operational and considered to be successful after assessing progress after the first grading period based on student report cards. One student failed a class, no incidents were reported of serious discipline problems, and student attendance levels held at 97 per cent. Based on data from semi-structured interviews (Research Journal 2/11/08) with teachers and students, the results of the Freshman Academy after one grading period included that:

- Teachers unanimously reported being more aware of student needs and successfully meeting them.

- Because of having shared team time each day, teachers felt they proactively and successfully dealt with students having potentially serious academic or behavioural issues.

- Students reported feeling positive about their teachers, felt cared for, and said teachers made obvious efforts to make learning fun.

- Students reported that their teachers really listened to what they had to say about improving class and that teachers wanted them to succeed.

- There were few serious disciplinary issues compared to the precious year. There was only one incident of an out-of-school suspension for the first

quarter, as opposed to over twenty days of suspension in the previous year.

Working collaboratively with staff, we made these reform changes and successfully implemented them within eighteen months of my tenure as school principal, using TQT as my guide to leadership decisions and behaviour.

I felt justified in pursuing this reform as I believed we had used a democratic and dialogic process in planning and making decisions. The results of the first semester of the drastic school reform showed we had improved in meeting the transformational quality needs of students more comprehensively than we had in the past. We measured improved student academic performance and teacher satisfaction, greatly reduced levels of discipline issues, and a more positive learning culture with people smiling, laughing, and greeting each other warmly in the hallways. I felt further justification after hearing students and teachers praise the academy design to a reporter for a regional newspaper doing a story on the effectiveness of the program. I believe a quote from a freshman student in the academy to a state newspaper article regarding the academy speaks to the success of using TQT as a guide to my school leadership and for developing education programs and learning experiences that met the holistic quality needs of students and teachers:

> So far, teachers said homework is getting done, there have been minimal disciplinary problems and students seem to be more relaxed and focused overall. Freshman Lori Hadlyme can attest to that.
>
> "I don't like being a freshman, but I like being at this school," the 15-year-old said. "I'm surprised because I thought it was going to be a lot worse. I just like it all. It's pretty cool how we get treated like royalty, basically."

How my values and beliefs were denied in leadership practice during the reform process; "narrative wreckage" and how I improved my emotional resiliency in the face of adversity

My role in the promotion of transformational quality as way to challenge and eliminate the impoverished understanding and modelling of quality in the school led to troublesome situations of tremendous turmoil, challenge, and adversity for me and the school and local community. There were three critical incidents that occurred during the reform process of improving the academic and social milieu of the school made me improve my emotional resiliency in the face of hatred, anger, maliciousness, and political power struggles I had never experienced before as a professional education leader. I had tested the imagined solution to overcoming the *status quo* of impoverishment of the social and academic milieu of the school with the development of TQT as a guide to education excellence, and the results were substantial improvement in the curriculum, pedagogy, and social and academic milieu of the school culture. There was a price to pay, however, for challenging the *status quo*, and though the improvement of student learning and the majority of the teaching staff were quantifiably evident, there was a deterioration of my reputation and an organised movement to impoverish my character, professionally and personally. What I had to endure from a vocal minority, as it was a politically powerful group, resulted in a heavy toll on me personally and professionally. One result was my hospitalisation for exceedingly high blood pressure and physical exhaustion for two days. The following sections discuss three critical incidents that required that I improve my emotional resiliency in order to maintain both the honour and integrity of my leadership and my physical health. All three of the critical incidents dealt with fallout from making the changes to the social and academic milieu of the school.

CRITICAL ISSUE 1: Teacher Misbehaviour and Disrespect

I noted an inordinate number of teachers sending e-mails or playing games on their computers during classroom learning time. There existed a code of conduct policy for the school district in regards to teacher and staff use of the computer network. Each teacher and staff member who had access to a computer signed the code of conduct. The code of conduct stated that e-mail should not be used in way abusive of others, should be polite, should not be used to send false, malicious, or misleading information, should use appropriate language, and should not to be used during teacher instructional time. Unfortunately, three teachers and one administrator (the vice principal) all had seriously violated the code of conduct. It is relevant I name the vice-principal, Lisa, here as she was my number one leadership colleague and had been working behind the scenes since her demotion to have me removed from my post, as evidenced by the multiple e-mails I intercepted she was sending to staff seeking to discredit my leadership and have herself reinstated as principal during the years 2006-2007.

Tom and Agnes, two of the teachers, admitted to sending inappropriate e-mail of an inflammatory nature about me and demeaning other staff members and using the computer for personal business during instructional time. They apologised for their misjudgement. The third teacher (also the High School Hall of Fame basketball coach and popular and powerful local political official), Mike, denied having sent any inappropriate e-mails or using the computer network for personal business during instructional time. He stated he felt picked on and harassed and deserved to have proof of my claim (Teacher union meeting, 9/2/06). After showing Mike and his union representative copies of sixty e-mails he had written that used profane language and spread false rumours about me and other staff to discredit my leadership to other staff, local civic and political leaders, and state newspapers, he pushed them aside and said his

freedom of expression and right to privacy federal rights had been violated and that he would sue me.

I had to make a decision about how to deal with this situation fairly and justly. Tom and Agnes had shown remorse and seemed generally disappointed and regretful for their behaviour. Their heads were down as each of them spoke to me about the issue and did not make eye-contact when we communicated. Lisa, the vice-principal and former principal of the school who had been demoted, admitted she had been inappropriate in her use of the computer network and said she was sorry she had offended me with the spreading of false rumours and making rude comments about me to staff through the use of e-mails on the school computer network during the school work day. However, her body language and tone sent a conflicting message. She had a smirk on her face, her arms were tightly crossed, and when she said she was sorry she stared intensely into my eyes. She seemed to me sorry she had been caught, not for what she had done. My colleague, an administrator from another school in the district, assisted me in the meetings and stated he thought she was being insincere as well due to her demeanour (Research Journal 10/6/06).

My responsibility was to investigate the disciplinary issues, relay the facts, and make recommendations to the superintendent for disciplinary action. The superintendent is the only person with the authority to provide disciplinary consequences to teachers and staff in the school district. I met with the superintendent and recommended both Tom and Agnes receive a week's suspension with no pay. In regards to Mike, he refused to admit he had sent any e-mails, felt his constitutional rights had been violated, and proposed the false idea someone had broken into his computer on numerous occasions and sent the e-mails to set him up.

Intuitively, it made sense to me that Tom and Agnes would be assigned a lesser

consequence than Mike as they both acknowledged wrongdoings. Mike's refusal to take any responsibility and Lisa's misconduct as a school leader, in my estimation, deserved a greater consequence. I recommended Mike receive a six-day suspension with no pay. I recommended Lisa, the vice-principal, be given a dismissal warning and put on a performance plan and suspended for a week. After discussion, we agreed to my recommendations except the number of the days suspended. Once I informed the staff members of the consequence, Lisa went on medical leave and found a job at another school, Tom retired at the year's end, and Mike went on medical leave and consequently resigned as teacher and coach at the school. Agnes resigned.

The intention I had of recommending levying consequences for the teachers and staff was to reinforce that their behaviour was not acceptable in demonstrating malicious, prejudicial, and disrespectful behaviour toward others in our school learning community. I believed suspending was necessary to reinforce the unacceptability of impoverishing the life of another and the school learning community. Unfortunately, due to my recommendations for disciplining the teachers, more than half of the staff seemed more careful around me, and certain staff informed me people were "sort of scared of me" and were afraid to make mistakes for fear of punishment. I naively thought the staff would largely support me. In essence, they did, but at the price that a small group of staff no longer viewed me as an accessible collaborator, but rather as leader to be feared. I hoped to work out a strategic plan using TQT as my guide to action to change this view of me as a leader when I found myself in a plethora of other problematic and troublesome situations with the teaching and school sport coaching staff.

I became aware of new problems at the same time as the suspension of the teachers and the vice-principal occurred. A teacher was caught kicking a student, calling

multiple students names (like "stupid", "loser," and "no good"), and being threatening. Another teacher was caught telling lies that put the school in potential legal trouble. Another staff member had been caught spreading false rumours about staff members in school and in the community. Another teacher continued to wear revealing clothing in to school after repeated warnings to improve her attire. Her inappropriate attire resulted in students' coming to my office to complain they could often see the teacher's vaginal area and breasts, which was distracting. Lastly, there was a teacher who consistently violated special education policies and procedures and refused to change his behaviour and decisions. Each of these teachers decided to resign from the school due to the possibility of discipline for refusal to improve their actions and behaviour. In my first year as school principal a total of eight staff resigned, including the school vice-principal. The high school staff consisted of twenty-eight people, so this meant that close to thirty per cent of the staff left after my first year due to disciplinary issues or the threat of one. I felt there were few alternatives afforded me as each of the teachers who left had violated the State Code of Professional Responsibilities for Teachers (Connecticut State Department of Education, 2012, p.1-4) in at least one of the following code tenets:

- Be cognizant of the influence of teachers upon the community-at-large, and, therefore, shall not knowingly misrepresent facts or make false statements;
- Recognize, respect and uphold the dignity and worth of students as individual human beings, and, therefore, deal justly and considerately with students;
- Shall not emotionally abuse students.

In retrospect, I know I acted from my values and beliefs and in accordance with the State Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers (2006). Each disciplinary

situation was thoroughly examined, and I took time to make my decisions about the disciplinary action I believed appropriate to the school superintendent. The message received by staff, as told to me confidentially by a staff member was that "the old ways were gone," and "I would not put up with any nonsense that stood in the way of our vision of a caring and good school" (Research Journal 11/3/2008).

However, the message received by a vocal minority of board of education members, the mayor, and local press was summed up by a caller during a sports talk radio show early in my principalship. He stated I was "an egotistical, left-wing socialistic radical who runs the school as a tyrant and punishes anyone who disagrees with him with no respect for PHS tradition".

CRITICAL ISSUE 2: Dealing with Homosexual Slurs and Prejudice by the School Baseball Coach

Tom, the baseball coach, was a member of the local community and alumni of the school and member of the local community. He coached at the school for the past few years and was popular among his players. He was popular in the local community and widely known for his athletic prowess as the winning pitcher in the state championship baseball game when he attended PHS in the 1980s. He was, in short, a "local legend." I had already dug a deep political hole for suspending another popular coach a few months earlier in the winter of 2006, and the idea of suspending another popular coach a few months later was not my desire.

A parent called to issue a complaint to me that her son was being called a "faggot" (an American slur for homosexuals) by the coach, Tom during practices in front of the other players and was often told he "threw the baseball like a girl." I followed up with the coach to discuss whether the allegations were true, and he readily admitted that he said these things and said them often as a motivational tool for

improvement.

I discussed with him how I perceived him calling a student-athlete a faggot was prejudicial and demeaning. I also stated that telling boys they threw like a girl was disrespectful of the female athletes who played softball and to women in general. I hadn't prepared myself for Tom's position that he had done nothing wrong. The idea that Les would think what he was saying to players was okay in his mind for motivating and improving student-athlete performance never crossed my mind. Les stressed to me the importance of motivating players and that communicating with them by saying such things as "faggot" or referring to their playing as being "like girls' motivated them to perform better. I informed him of the professional code of responsibility for teachers, which equally applied to school coaches, that stated a teacher/coach must "recognize, respect, and uphold the dignity and worth of students as individual human beings, and, therefore, deal justly and considerately with students" (State Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers, 2006). The coach, however, saw nothing inconsiderate by calling kids names and using homophobic language as a motivational tool for student-athletes.

I knew if I disciplined this coach, the "levee" would break. The mob of upset citizens angry about previous popular coach and teacher suspensions would surely fuel the fire of opposition against me. I called the school superintendent and told her of what the coach had done, and she asked me what I planned on doing about it. Usually, I had a quick response for the superintendent, as I would have strategized the best course of action, worked out a plan, and then been ready to present a course of action when I spoke with her. However, this time I didn't have a ready response because I could not decide what the right thing to do. She asked what made this situation different from what Mike had done.

250

She plainly said, "You know the right thing to do" (Research Journal 15/4/06). I told her I did and I would suspend the coach for two games for his actions. I made the decision that the coach would work with the school's athletic director in getting some training on how to motivate players without using demeaning and demoralizing remarks and reinforce our commitment to display C.A.P.A.C.I.T.Y. behaviours with student-athletes. The superintendent agreed with my decision and told me to stand strong and not to give in to pressure. It was the right decision, she told me, because we were staying true to our value of meeting student needs first and foremost in fostering healthy men and women (Research Journal 15/4/06).

When I called Les, he refused to come in and wanted to know what I was going to do on the phone. I did not want to have this discussion over the phone as it seemed too impersonal. Yet Les repeatedly said he wanted to talk on the phone and did not want to see me personally. Reluctantly, I gave in and informed him that we needed to work out how he was going to improve the way he talked to his players and he was being suspended for two games. After I heard a growling sound through the phone, there was a long moment of silence. He then said, "Don't bother, I resign. But don't think you have heard the last of me" (Research Journal 15/4/06).

He didn't wait long. His picture appeared in the paper day the next day with a story he told to the press. He appeared on the local radio station morning talk show by the end of the week demeaning me and my misunderstanding of how to motivate high school student athletes.

Forty local community members banded together and initiated a protest to be held at the next board of education meeting in two weeks. The local radio morning talk show routinely fielded calls for months after the baseball coach's suspension demanding I be fired and how I represented what is worst in modern public education. It was not unusual

for me to field a phone call, or be left a message, or be told through second parties of people anonymously making threats against my safety. I deeply believed that I was doing the right thing and had made informed, rational, and value-based decisions. Yet I was beginning to feel that all my efforts to help reform the school culture were about to go off the rails.

The board of education meeting was not scheduled for two more weeks, and I had to deal with who was going to coach the baseball team as they had a game the next day and the season was ready to go into full swing. The assistant coach came to me for the job, and I decided against it. He admittedly supported the coach's using the homophobic remarks and so was not suitable for the position. After speaking with the superintendent about the predicament, I offered to assume the role of head coach until we could hire a new one. We estimated it should take no more than two weeks to find someone suitable for the job.

This was not an ideal situation, but it was an unlooked-for opportunity to role model what I expected from coaches' behaviour. I had coached for a few years for athletes in ages from 8 to14. I had not coached at the high school level before, but I felt comfortable that I could meet the challenge for the short duration of a few weeks until a new coach was found. I had playing experience as I had been a varsity starter on my high school baseball team that went to the state finals. I had also played football as a starting player on a state championship team and played rugby in college. I had played and coached sports enough to be able to fill in for a couple of weeks.

The first game was one of the greatest tests of my character and my emotional resilience as I showed up to the school bus with the players all aboard dressed for the game. I was greeted by a mix of icy stares, some not choosing to look at me, and one or two faces that seemed agreeable to my prescience. (These faces to belonged to first-year

players). I shared with the student-athletes that this was a temporary situation and that by working together we could make this be a success start to the season. I was able to retain one parent volunteer assistant coach who had proficient experience and knowledge in high school baseball. He came to me after school and made it clear he didn't like me and was angry with me for what I had done to the coach. He, however, shared with me his dedication to the kids' success and would help me for their sake. I accepted his offer to help, all the while knowing I had just put myself in a precarious position. I chose to not see this person as a "mole" that was going to report back to the former coach and the community everything he saw me doing "wrong." Instead, knowing he was going to report to the community everything I did, I saw it as an opportunity to role model how a transformational quality-focused coach leads and behaves. I had a feeling I was being overly optimistic, but I felt at that point that optimism was all I had going for me.

When I read out the starting line-up based on previous line-ups and input from the assistant coach, I had not prepared myself for what occurred next. Immediately, a player, Matt, stood up and said this was "bullshit." He said he should be starting as catcher and everyone knew it, even the assistant coach. At that moment the assistant coach turned his head and then, slowly, his body away from me. There were now seventeen sets of teenage eyes staring at me. I asked Matt to see me privately and said we would talk once the game started. Matt escalated his anger by saying I was a joke and they all wanted their old coach back and no one wanted me. He then informed me he was starting the game regardless of what I said.

I instructed Matt this was not the appropriate time to talk about these issues and I would give him my full attention once the game started. He told me to "fuck off" and sat back with his arms across his chest. I told Matt to go up into the stands and have his

mother bring him home and to see me in the morning. He asked if he was kicked off the team. I stated he was going to miss today's game and we would talk in the morning. He stood up, tore the shirt off his back, and threw it to the ground. He called me an "asshole," and he walked out of the dugout to the stands where his mother was sitting. Suddenly, another player took his jersey and said in a low voice that he was quitting too.

The umpire said to start the game a moment later. The team hit the field, and I leaned back in the dugout feeling doubt in my ability to keep this up. I did not have much time to reflect as the assistant coach seemed to enjoy telling me throughout the game about how we had just lost our best catcher and this situation wasn't going to work out for me and perhaps I should admit I made a big mistake "making" the coach resign.

We ended up winning two games and losing four games over the two weeks before the board of education meeting. This may seem like a poor record. However, considering the team had only four wins over the last two years, this seemed like a modest success for the team. We ended up beating two higher ranked teams in the league, and all of the lost games were close to the end. I do not mention this to use the win-lose data as valid to support or disprove my success with the team. It is important to note because the most popular criticisms levelled against me were that I was a bad coach and leader and if the other coach had still running the team they would have been much better.

Unlike Coach Les, I did not yell at umpires or the student-athletes for supposed errors. I did not demean players when they were performing poorly. What I did was to yell for players in support to do well and compliment good effort. I discussed with umpires questionable calls in a respectful manner and without causing a scene. I spoke

with players who were performing poorly (e.g., striking out, throwing or fielding blunders, losing concentration) to help them understand for themselves how they could improve and how to correct it and provided them with positive affirmation so they could meet their goals. However, when the board of education meeting began I quickly saw that the perception the protestors had of my transformational quality approach to sport coaching was negative and the people coming to support the former coach were diametrically opposed to my perception of Coach Les as doing anything wrong.

I walked up to the door of the meeting after just working a fourteen hour day and was greeted by a mass of angry protestors. They were abuzz with chatter when I first opened the door to the meeting then the room fell silent for a moment while I felt the room's eyes upon me, and then the buzz resumed at louder level. I sat in the front of the room as I watched numerous players from the baseball team, community members, and parents demand the board of education reinstate the coach and fire me. The two players who had quit the team gave a tearful speech how they missed their coach and that I was driving the team into the ground. Lastly, the coach spoke to the board of education greeted by cheers of support. I wrote down the exact words he used for one part of the speech that I found interesting in my research journal at the time:

> You have to motivate kids. They get lazy. It's not like it used to be when I played. Yes, I said what I said. Where's the harm? I have worked hard and the people of this town know it. I can't believe I am in this spot. I didn't do anything wrong. My players know it, and so do all the people here. If you don't like it you can kiss me where the sun doesn't shine.

I had to review what he had said. He had told the board of education that he was doing the right thing by calling kids "faggots" and "girls," and if they do not like it they could kiss his buttocks.

We had an executive meeting after the board of education meeting with no one from the public allowed to attend. It was now after 11 p.m. The meeting consisted of the board, the superintendent, and the business manager. I was told by the chairperson of the board of education to rehire Tom as coach, and they wanted to know from me how I could make this work. I flatly told the board that since Tom had resigned he would have to reapply as the job position that had been posted in the media. They informed me that the directive from the board of education was to hire the coach back immediately. The reason stated by the Board of Education members was that the situation was causing too much public disruption and was making the town look bad in the regional press. The board chairperson stated, "Tell the press he apologized and you feel that he simply made a mistake, and we are moving forward." I asked the board to consider the apology as perhaps not authentic. I asked them to remember what he said, "I apologize, but if you don't like it, you can kiss where the sun doesn't shine." I asserted that this was a clear example to me he had no understanding that he did anything wrong and so he did not plan on improving his behaviour as a coach or authentically apologising. The response I received from the board chairperson was that the town was angry about his and that this would make things better. He said this situation could it make it difficult for me to make the academic improvements I wanted, and financial support I needed for the school would perhaps be in jeopardy.

I succumbed to their directive (admittedly because I feared being sacked) and added that at least the coach should have some supervision from the athletic director. They agreed the athletic director should be in the dugout for the rest of the season to help monitor Les's behaviour. The next morning I called the coach and welcomed him back with the proviso that the athletic director would be helping and monitoring his behaviour in the dugout during games and at the practice field. He said he would be back to

coaching the same day. After interviews with a few newspapers and the local radio station, I went home at the end of the day like a dog with his tail between his legs. I had violated my values and beliefs and done so consciously by rehiring the coach back under the false premise that he had apologised and that it was in the best interest of the student-athletes of the school baseball team.

My journal entry from that night was as follows:

What a miserable day! I am starting to feel like the walls crumbling down upon me. No, that's silly I haven't even built any walls yet! No, what I have been doing is knocking down walls. No wonder everyone is so mad. If they would just give me a chance, if they could only see how much better the school will be if we stop the bullying, the racism and sexism, and the expectations of failure and mediocrity. But that may the crux of the problem, Billy. You never thought that perhaps that the town DOES SEE what you are trying to do and they don't like it. It seems silly to say that the town leaders are in agreement that, at least, a small amount of racism, sexism, prejudice, and other oppressive behaviours was okay. It was not only okay, it seemed many of the people the leaders were listening to were saying it is part of being an "American." I remember hearing on more than one occasion people saying what's wrong with America is people like me leading schools in an anti-American direction. Wow, that's even more depressing. And a bit scary! It still seems a bit too radical to think that this is the situation I am immersed in. Yet, why are so many people vehemently assured I am the town's number one enemy and villain? I guess it makes most sense if what I thought was a radical idea was the way it is. I am beginning to

feel like things are going to get worse. Well, that's enough complaining today to you journal. We'll end on a more upbeat note. I'm not giving up. They will either force me out somehow or I won't be asked to return to work. I will not quit. (Research Journal 15/5/07)

The narrative of the coach resigning and my instruction to rehire him revealed the following as facts:

● The coach believed calling student-athletes as a faggot or as girls was an acceptable motivational tool.

● The board of education demanded he be reinstated as head coach.

● All who spoke at the board of education meeting demonstrated support for the coach.

● The board of education told me the coach needs to be rehired if I expected to move forward with the school change I desired.

● The students who had quit the baseball team were reinstated.

● I felt I was contradicting my values and beliefs by acquiescing to the board of education directives and did do nevertheless.

● I felt threatened by the board that if I didn't go with the plan of rehiring the coach my position as principal was in jeopardy.

The parent member of my critical friend group summarised her assessment of the situation:

I heard it like this. You didn't like this coach because he was friends with Mike, the basketball coach you had suspended earlier in the year. Since you ran Mike out of town, all of his friends and fans think you purposely were after Les next. I have heard people say to me that I am foolish to support you. I don't really care what they have to say. I appreciate you

listening to me and I appreciate you speaking with me about the school. I don't always agree with you, but I believe in making the school better as you do. Anyways, people have said to me that you told the coach to quit or you would fire him. So he quit. I heard Mike talking to people and saying he was going to get a rally together to get you fired at that board meeting. He got some people, didn't he, but not too many. As I heard the story from people it seems the consensus is that Mike scared the board into making them rehire the coach. You know how Mike usually gets his way around here. It's ridiculous why people listen to him. But, they do. So, you are forced to hire the baseball coach back and Mike is in seventh heaven telling everyone how he got the coach back and beat you. As for how many people believe the story I can't tell. But I've heard it around town consistently. I figure some of it is true and some not, but either way, you did what had to be done and that's what you are hired to do. You are supposed to do the right thing not the popular thing. I'm glad you did the right thing at first. But I sure wouldn't want to be you? I mean that respectfully. It must be tough staying positive after you violated everything you stated you believe about quality. (Robin, parent interview 2/6/08)

The reaction was the same among all members of my critical friend group. All believed I had violated the values and beliefs I professed to be dedicated to by rehiring the coach. The essential question for me was whether to compromise or not. Reluctantly, I chose to compromise.

CRITICAL INCIDENT 3: The Firing of the School District Superintendent and

Hiring of an Interim Superintendent

A week before the new Freshman Academy was up and running to start the new school year in 2008, the school superintendent was fired. She was my mentor, critical friend, and boss. It was a shock to me and to her as well. Though it is outside the focus of this thesis to go into this in depth, she was essentially fired for her unwillingness to cede to board of education recommendations and wishes to stop the school reforms I undertook discussed in this thesis (Phone conversation with Superintendent 21/8/08). This was a major blow to my support system as the high school principal, and I feared the program and the other education reforms we worked hard to implement at PHS were at risk. Unfortunately, a retired superintendent who championed the *status quo*, Richard, was hired as interim superintendent.

I found myself in a district-wide administrators' meeting Richard scheduled a few days before the opening of a new school year. Richard informed each principal of his perceptions of their schools. He was complimentary of the elementary and middle school principal, only noting minor needs for change in a few areas. As far as my principalship of the high school, Richard let the district administrative team know clearly he did not like what was going on in the high school. He did not like the fact that classes were being changed from homogeneous to heterogeneous. He did not like the way the management of athletics had been, was displeased I had caused a notable change in staff turnover and course selections, and was concerned about how the percentage of officially identified special needs students at the school was high and was hurting the school district financially.

Richard had so much feedback for me that he told everyone in the meeting that he and I needed to spend a lot of time together and he would see me after the meeting. I

was to clear my calendar for the day. I did not need to have a certificate in reading body language to understand I was in trouble and this man wanted me out of the principalship position. However, as Richard would tell me, he did not just want me out of the principalship position, he thought it best if I stay out of the principalship and education profession altogether. I spent the next two months shuffling between the superintendent's office and the PHS on a routine basis to meet with Richard about his displeasure with my leadership and the direction in which I was leading the high school.

His primary issues were these:

- I supported not retaining eighth grade students and having them enter the new Freshman Academy we had created. He demanded the students be isolated in a few rooms at the high school until mid-year. They were not to be in classes with other kids and preferably not the lunchroom with their classmates. The kids were still being retained, but now at the high school rather than the middle school.

- I was accused to have co-conspired with the school superintendent and director of special education to place three special education children in alternative schools for emotional troubled students, which he considered illegal and punishable criminally. He believed the students should have been expelled and receive at-home tutoring, not the spending of extra monies to send the students to an alternative school.

- He stated bluntly that he liked and respected Coaches Mike and Les, and that what I had done to them was inexcusable. He believed my philosophy of education, transformational quality, and how it related to school athletics was inappropriate and not becoming of a school administrator.

- He did not like the social education programs I had brought to the school

as part of improving the social milieu of the school. He specifically cited the Building Healthy Men and Women program created by a former National Football League star who was working first-hand with the staff and students. He also had distaste for my implementation of the Positive Directions program I had implemented that had been recommended by the school's award-winning psychologist. It was a program where people from the local area who were incarcerated because of serious crimes came to the school under the supervision of guards and the warden to educate kids about the hazards of criminality and power of doing right. To a lesser degree, he didn't have much enthusiasm for the Gay-Straight Alliance and its mission to develop sensitivity and tolerance for people's different sexual preferences. Richard stated he saw no rational purpose for its existence at the school and these programs were clear examples of my unfitness for being a school leader.

- Richard's greatest umbrage at was my educational value and belief system in transformational quality as a way to improve the way quality was understood and modelled in the school. A critical approach to public education was not compatible with his view of behaviourally based education. As such, he demanded I change my value and belief system dramatically if I planned on keeping my position as principal of PHS. He saw educational quality as success on state-mandated academic standardised tests, student grade achievement, low levels of discipline problems, and homogenously grouped classrooms that appeared orderly with students quiet and attentive to their teacher's lecture.

> I wrote in my journal after a lengthy meeting with Richard in his office:
>
> > Okay, I think I am in trouble. Richard is all over me. What is going on
> > with him telling me how good of a coach and teacher Mike is. That's

insane! Mike likes to read the paper or send to people degrading e-mail messages about me and his colleagues while he is supposed to be teaching. He is disrespectful acts prejudice and sexist and enjoys bullying people. Basically, he is a pretty mean spirited man. Richard has never seen him coach or teach. So where does he get his opinion, from meeting with Mike at a Board of Finance meeting where Mike is chairperson? Richard can't understand why I have a problem with Mike because he is a stand-up guy. What was the deal with him telling me I am not principal material because my educational value and beliefs, Could he be any more transparent he wants me out? I think I can hold out until the new superintendent is hired in the spring. I am going to stay out of his way and try to not to talk with him. Avoid him, Billy. Things will work out. You can do this! (Research Journal 15/9/08)

Two weeks later, my entries are bleak: "That's it. No more. Richard is not going to relent, and eventually he'll find a way to fire me" (Research Journal 29/9/08).

I was ordered by the superintendent, within days of his hiring, to isolate six students who had failed their eighth grade year. Richard wanted these students to be punished for their lack of learning and effort in eighth grade. He instructed me to isolate these students in a separate classroom from other students because they were no longer considered ninth grade students. They were still eighth grade students who needed to show academic success for half the year if they wanted to be promoted to ninth grade status. This meant they were barred from participating in extracurricular activities and sports and could not attend school functions. The directive from the new superintendent went against the grain of my values and deeply held humanistic beliefs. However, I followed them.

I asked myself why I followed what the superintendent told me with so little resistance. Obviously, it was because it was a directive, and if I had not followed it I would lose my job.

I informed Richard I was uncomfortable with isolating the students and believed it may be against educational law in the state to do so. Five of the eight students were special needs students, and by law a classroom configuration cannot isolate students from mainstream class instruction for most of the day. Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), there was a requirement that special needs students be educated in a regular education environment as much as possible. This was referred to as a least restrictive environment. In other words, special needs students, to the greatest degree possible, are to be educated with their peers and not isolated away from them. Additionally, due to a federal court ruling, *P.J. et al. v. State of Connecticut, Board of Education, et al*., state schools were to increase the time special needs students were placed in classes with non-disabled peers. At a minimum, schools are to ensure that eighty per cent of a special needs student's time is spent in a classroom environment with non-disabled peers. What the new interim superintendent was instructing me to do was against IDEA law and the federal educational mandates from the court case. When I informed him that it was my understanding that isolating students from their peers was a violation of law, he became agitated and angry.

He responded to me, "I don't care. We are not letting these kids simply move on to ninth grade. They have to earn it. What you and Lisa [the pervious superintendent] did socially promoting them to the high school is questionably a violation of board of education policy. Do what I say!" (Research Journal 3/9/08).

I wrote his statement down in my journal after the meeting because I was both shocked and appalled by his response. I did not have a tape-recorder, but what he had

said etched itself indelibly on my mind. My interpretation of his response was that he had said: "I don't care about the law in this case. Do what I say because I am the boss. These kids were lazy and they need to pay. We will get our pound of flesh. And by the way, I think you violated board of education policy commiserating with the superintendent and passing eighth grade students to the high school without their successfully graduating. This is a basis for possible termination."

I knew we had not broken any board of education policies. It was the superintendent's purview to promote an eighth grader to the high school when they had not met graduation requirements if it were in the student's best interest. The problem was that no superintendent had ever done it before in the history of the town. Therefore, it could have seemed illegal to him. The new interim superintendent was a *status quo* advocate who acted out of a behaviourist mind-set. To him the idea of eighth graders' moving to high school without passing the eighth grade was preposterous. He was incredulous over my agreement with the superintendent to promote the students socially to high school. He knew that I disagreed with him profoundly both on principle, matter of policy, and education law in this matter. His ordering me to do what I knew was morally wrong from an educational perspective was a direct attack on my values and beliefs.

I failed to parry this attack and academically and socially isolated these eight students from the rest of the school. Sadly, I was praised publically by the board of education, the local community, and the teachers union (initiated by middle school teachers) for my decision to isolate these students. Remarkably, the parents of the eight students supported the idea of isolating their children until they "earned" the ninth grade status. Two sets of parents of the isolated students actually thanked me for the great job we were doing with their kid. I felt as though I were operating within a science fiction movie where what seemed to be reality could not possibly be true. It did not take me

more than two months to reach the conclusion that the reality before me, as bizarre as it seemed, was as it appeared to be. People really did believe that isolating students in a room for most of the school day for a minimum of four months as punishment was good educational practice.

My leadership practice of excluding the eight students from their peers socially and academically was a severe contradiction of my educational values and beliefs. I professed to be a humanist and a critical theorist who embraced TQT, yet I had promoted and praised the success of a program based on oppressing and punishing eight unsuccessful special needs students. My job meant more to me at the time than standing up for what was right and exposing injustice. I am, in retrospect, disgusted at my lack of moral fortitude to do the right thing.

I had thought about asking the superintendent to provide me his directive in writing based on my concerns that he was asking me to break the law and not acting in the best interests of students by isolating them. However, I did not do this and submissively carried out his directives. This was an action I regretted as I ran from what I believed to be a justified cause to fight for: the humanistic treatment of all students. Instead of fighting against the injustice of isolating the students, I went along with it publically. An article in a neighbouring state's newspaper entitled, "Promoting Failed Students Explained: Eight Students Participate in Transitional Program," encapsulated what I was doing to isolate the struggling students.

> All of Potsdam's freshmen students are in a new program at the high school known as the Freshmen Academy. The failing eighth-graders have been placed in a special transitional program that allows no extracurricular participation, including athletics until the students attain competency in eighth-grade language arts, science and math, as well as demonstrate exemplary attendance. Students

must also attend after-school tutoring sessions once a week. Students who excel

in the program will be given the opportunity to move in to the mainstream

Freshman Academy with their peers, while failure to meet the objectives will

result in a longer transitional period, Mr. Barry said. Students will be evaluated

at the end of the marking period. (2008, p.1)

I failed to report to the newspaper that the students were isolated not only from

extracurricular activities, but also activities during the school day. They were not

allowed to attend, for example, ninth grade community meetings or pep rallies, or go on

field trips with their peers. The superintendent was quoted in the article as believing the

program was successful, and I provided data to support his claim:

At the meeting Tuesday night, interim Superintendent Richard Richards said,

"The critical month is going to be next month. A goodly of these students will be

able to transfer in to the ninth-grade academy. Mr. Barry reported that in the

transitional program there is one student who has had significant disciplinary

referrals, for a total, he said, of five incidents. The transitional students have a

95.7 percent attendance rate, just a little lower than the 96.23 percent attendance

rate of the regular Freshman Academy, which has about 80 students. Seven of

the eight students have at least one grade of "A" and five have at least two grades

of "B," he said in his report to the board. Only two students have more than one

grade of "D"... The grading period ends in about three weeks, when the decision

will be made as to how many of the transitional academy students will be

allowed to join their peers and participate in school activities. (ibid).

When I re-read this article I was extremely disappointed in myself. I had made a

decision to support a program and actively promote the oppression of others with the

alibi "I was told to do it." It was neither necessary nor socially just to alienate students

267

from their peers, ostracise their failure publically, and use manipulative and punitive methods to force students to "learn." I had not promoted a transformational understanding and modelling of quality and was disappointed in my conscious violation of my values and beliefs in my leadership practice.

The action plan to create a Freshman Academy was a glowing success, but it came at an unexpected and destructive price. My educational values and beliefs were denied in my practice to a gross degree. The new superintendent focused his primary effort in undermining the humanistic vision I had for the school. He saw my humanistic and critical education values and beliefs and my belief in TQT as foolish and not the appropriate vision for an American high school principal. My interpretation came from what he said to me on the second day after we had met:

> Billy, I don't agree with what you are doing here. Suspending the basketball coach was foolish, and what happened with the baseball coach? That seemed like another poor decision. You don't make good decisions. Look at the eighth grade students you are going to let be in the ninth grade. No accountability, and you support that? C'mon Billy, what were you thinking of? You and the old superintendent really made a mess of things. You should rethink if this is the right position for you, if you get my meaning. (Research Journal 27/8/2008)

Unfortunately, my action research project at Potsdam High School ended earlier than expected. After two years, I resigned from being principal at Potsdam High School three months into the school year. The superintendent had asked to make other decision that contradicted my values and beliefs by supporting such actions as defaming the character of the past superintendent in public, working with the superintendent to have another administrator fired, and denying education programs for students who were in

268

desperate need of them. I would not make a similar mistake as before in transgressing my core values and resigned my position. I believed resigning was congruent with my educational values and beliefs, and yet I asked myself, had I made the best decision? I had left a school of staff and students that had put their trust in me as their leader. I had abandoned that trust by resigning. Yet I knew if I continued in the leadership role I would continue to make decisions and take actions against my will because Richard would have fired me had I not.

I know I did what was best for me, but I still wonder if I did what was best for others. I still wonder if I made the right decision to resign. Perhaps I should have stayed and "fought the good fight." I do know that my decision to resign was motivated by a refusal to make decisions or support actions any longer that promoted the oppression of others or myself. I still ponder the idea that perhaps somehow, some way, I could have overcome the challenges of the situation. I will never know what could have been. However, I am committed never again to fold under the pressure of people in positions of power to support injustice and oppression of other people. I am reminded of this value I hold dearly by Freire when he wrote, "To be authentic education must be liberating (1982, p.148).

CHAPTER SIX

Dissemination and Impact:

Evaluating My Claim to an Original Contribution to Knowledge

This chapter discusses how I successfully fulfilled the living standards of judgements set for the research and how I effectively disseminated my research to a diversified international audience. I demonstrate how Transformational Quality (TQ) theory is an original contribution to educational knowledge that improved my leadership practice, influenced the learning of other people, and transformed the academic and social milieu of an American high school.

Dissemination Impact

The dissemination of my research occurred at two levels: the New England region of America via radio show appearances and workshop presentations and worldwide through the use of video of presentations of the research via YouTube (Youtube.com) and the largest professional network on the Internet, LinkedIn (Linkedin.com).

Disseminating my research at the regional level of the New England area was by far the most challenging. This was due to my appearance on live radio talk shows where I delineated the core tenets of TQT and how they were being implemented at Potsdam High School (PHS), where I served as principal. I appeared on three talk shows. One was a two-hour listener call-in for question and answers, a second show was an hour with listener call-in for questions and answers, and the third was a one-hour talk show featuring the Freshman Academy reform PHS had adopted to meet the transformational quality needs of students and teachers alike.

The two-hour listener call-in show featured a bevy of listeners calling in to

express their support or rejection of my implementation of the TQ philosophy as the head of the high school. The feedback was 60 per cent in support of my TQ inspired reforms and 40 per cent I opposition. I cannot reveal the location of the radio station as this would reveal the research site and name of the high school at which I was principal and violate the confidentiality of the participants of the action research study. The radio station was based in the fictional town of Potsdam and could be heard anywhere in the world via the Internet through streaming and could also be heard throughout the state on an FM radio channel.

The opposition to TQT was consistently in in the psychological, sociological, and existential quadrants of the meaning of quality. Opponents' consistent messages were that school was about physical and intellectual development and to a lesser degree sociological development. The show, which aired on March 4, 2007, was recorded for transcription purposes. Notable comments of opposition include the following:

- Public schools are not religious schools. You have no right to promote the values of collaboration and not ranking students. Our economy is based on competition, and you eliminating competition by not ranking students and having them work together does not prepare students for the real world. Perhaps, in a religious school this would be okay, but not when my tax dollars are going toward a public education meant to prepare students to deal with the harsh realities of the "dog eat dog" world we live in.

- Mr. Barry, boys will be boys. Your ideas of treating sports like classes in school where coaches are expected to behave in a similar manner show you do not understand sports. Sports have coaches; they are not classroom teachers. You have no idea how to manage high school sports. It is a highly competitive thing sports and coaches need to be able to motivate athletes to perform any way

they can. Kids need to learn there is a hierarchy to things in life.

● Mr. Barry, you are coddling students with your ideas of how to manage a high school. Psychologically, students need to learn to toughen up and do what they are expected to. Their home life is their home life. There is no excuse for not doing homework by not ranking students for the fear of causing psychological harm to students is a great example of what is wrong with liberals who are ruing our American public education system.

● Mr. Barry, you are a dictator. If people do not act the way you like you try to get rid of them. You are not from Potsdam, and before you go off ruining our school why don't you learn how things work around here? Perhaps, you would be better off at another school.

● You are not a good fit for our school. You are causing problems for the best teachers and coaches who demand respect from students and make sure they follow rules. You are ruining the school with your management approach.

These criticisms represent the callers who disagreed with my idea of transformational quality that I promoted as a leader in academics and athletics and socially at PHS. The callers were correct that I was not abiding by the "way things worked" at PHS, and I was challenging long-held presuppositions and traditions of the school that I found to be, with the agreement of the majority of the staff, impoverishing the meaning of quality at PHS. Examples of impoverishing norms of the school culture were demoralizing students to gain compliance, ranking students against each other, calling students derogatory names or embarrassing student as a means of motivating students and student athletes to perform better, and assigning students an exorbitant amount of homework for the sake of assigning homework and not to enhance learning. I share with you these representative comments to demonstrate the vocal minority of

people who detested my idea of transformational quality as a guide to school leadership, pedagogy, and athletic coaching and their desire for me to leave my position as the head of the high school. It is a testimony to the support of my critical friends, my boss, and the positive staff and students I worked with that I had the resiliency to stand strong against such opposition.

I conducted a presentation of my thesis for the members of the Living Values, Improving Practice Cooperatively: Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Project at the University of Bath, U.K., headed by Professor Jack Whitehead, the creator of living theory action research. The presentation was, unbeknownst to me at the time, videoed by CPD member Maria Huxtable. I agreed to Professor Whitehead's uploading the video to YouTube (*http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7HVfxq4l-8*). YouTube is the third most-viewed website on the Internet, after Google and Facebook. Prestigious universities in America, such as Stanford in Palo Alto, California, post videos of lectures from staff and distinguished guests on YouTube. The university I attend in the U.K., Nottingham Trent University, has their own channel on YouTube featuring videos from students and faculty alike. YouTube is a well-established electronic medium for disseminating scholarly information.

A prominent feature of YouTube is the choice of any viewer to click on a button to indicate anonymously that he or she "liked" or "disliked" a video. Some have complained that the anonymous voting process makes it easy for someone to "dislike" a video without a valid reason or out of spite for another person. Viewers of YouTube videos are also afforded the opportunity to leave comments about videos, but they must register a personal or organizational channel. This is a less anonymous process, and channel owners can often be identified.

There were 3,025 viewers of the 28-minute presentation of TQT at the

University of Bath from 79 countries within ten months of Professor Whitehead's posting the video of my presentation his YouTube channel. Interestingly, the video of my thesis presentation regarding TQT became the third most-watched video on Professor Whitehead's YouTube channel (*http://www.youtube.com/user/JackWhitehead*), which consisted of 420 uploaded living theory research based videos. The top watched videos on Professor Whitehead's YouTube channel had been on the site for an average of five years (*http://www.youtube.com/user/JackWhitehead/videos?sort=p&view=0*).

The feedback regarding the presentation of TQT to a global audience via YouTube was overwhelmingly positive. There were no recorded "dislikes" for the video. Comments from viewers from different parts of the world and from different professional backgrounds were posted on YouTube and on LinkedIn. All of the comments and assessments regarding the presentation appearing in this thesis are from people with whom I had no personal relationship except the one from a teacher I had a chance encounter with six years after working with him as an American high school English teacher.

LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network on the Internet with over a million members representing over 200 countries and territories and, as of 9 February 2012, (*http://press.linkedin.com/about*) 74 per cent of its members had a college degree, 26 per cent boasted a graduate degree, and more than half of the members are over the age of 35 (*http://linkhumans.com/blog/linkedin/linkedin-global-network-statistics-2011-infographic*). The YouTube video was posted on LinkedIn on 11 January 2012 to seven professional leadership groups: the European Association for Practitioner Research for Improving Learning, European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction, The Authentic Leadership Institute, Institute of Leadership and Management, Teacher

Training and Education, Action Research in Learning Organisations, and The Psychology of Creativity.

The following are representative responses from professionals in education and other disciplines from countries throughout the world after watching the video presentation of TQT:

An American member of the professional group The Psychology of Creativity and management consulting business owner on LinkedIn wrote about TQT:

If I'm inferring properly, you have developed a tool that teachers can use to self-assess their performance in the classroom (to oversimplify it). I'm sure it's much more than that, and probably much more widely applicable (e.g. to other relationship dynamics in various domains)…The video helps display your passion and energy (both very impressive) quite well. (10/2/2012)

Posted from a Belgium viewer in response to TQT:

This is the kind of discussion business owners should be having with their employees about quality and customer service. Quality is about much more than profits and employees following the rules. Good business is about making connections with customers with respect and care. Of course, a business needs a "quality" product or the best customer service in the world will not make a difference. I wish the video quality was better; however, the message I heard was a powerful one: Quality is caring. (20/2/2012)

A CEO of a London business commented on TQT from the professional LinkedIn group Institute of Leadership and Management, "When you watch this, look at the comments below the video. The best of them is 'This guy is so smart I can understand what he is saying.' What a fantastic comment on the quality being delivered by the speaker. Loved it" (17/2/2012).

A professional who worked as a Visual & New Media Artist specializing in supporting creativity and leadership in business from Manchester, U.K., wrote about TQT on the LinkedIn professional group Authentic Leadership, Interesting. Authentic leadership and quality modelling (9/2/2012).

An accreditation specialist and senior lecturer in personal/organisational transformation from Chester, U.K. posted his like of TQT in the professional group on LinkedIn,

"European Association for Practitioner Research on Improving Learning"(8/2/2012).

A Canadian member, a former senior lecturer at a Canadian university, of the professional group on LinkedIn Teacher Training and Education wrote as a comment:

I agree with you wholeheartedly. Sharing of strategies, insights, solutions to problems, disciplinary and otherwise, and in other matters, is a great benefit in the teaching community. Learning process, when shared with students encourages cognition and creativity. I learned about a concept called praxis before, which is putting theory and practice together. Sharing of insights is very synergistic. (23/2/2012)

The following are excerpts from a lengthy e-mail I received from an educator in Namibia, Africa, after watching the video and learning about TQT:

It was exciting to see you talking and thinking about …I see it in my students sometimes when the phones don't come out and, yes, they can't believe when the bell rings. A good moment recently was when I overheard the kids "arguing" about a part in a novel after class....then hours later at break! Of course, you can't hit home runs every day, but those days happen, yes. On a totally personal level, my friend Sara and I geek out about living by the "ABCDs"...based on the

theories of some wild guy we met on the Long Trail. He said that every day he seeks Adventure, Beauty, Connection, and Delight. We got to talking about it because he asked us about how we knew we were living each day in a way that fulfilled us…your framework lends itself to a type of reflection that I think is really helpful for both teachers and students." (Personal e-mail 5/2/2012)

One teacher, in reference to learning about TQT and using the tenets of the theory to guide his instruction as a an English teacher at an American public high school, said to me in a chance encounter years after teaching him about the TQT: "Your work has been an inspiration to me, and I use the tenets of the theory on a daily basis and have seen remarkable improvement in the performance, interest, and on-task behaviours of my students" (Research Journal 23/6/2011).

These examples are only a small sample of the responses I received from around the world and validated an "emerging resonance" of TQT as an improved way to understand, conceptualise, and model quality over the popular American idea of educational quality as primarily quantitative, exclusionary, and materialistic.

I also used YouTube to post a 50-second video explaining the core tents of living theory action research. The purpose of the video was two-fold: first, to educate other researchers and leaders on living theory as a transformational action research approach; and second, to assess the validity people from different academic disciplines and regions of the world had of living theory as a scholarly action research approach. In the first seven months of the video's posting there were 1,100 viewers from 57 different countries from five continents with all positive feedback. The following are a few representative comments I received from fellow educators and leaders:

An Australian member of the professional group "Action Research and Learning in Organisations' wrote:

"from my experience to evolve a living theory approach to action research requires questioning one's own identity including not only the dissonance between what we think and we do but also being very present to one's own emotional state and spiritual connection in the moment. I explored this in my Master's thesis, called "A Sense of Being," which I completed many years ago, since then have gone deeper and deeper into my emotional and spiritual being. An exploration not just of actions, also feelings, emotions, senses, spirit, connection with the place and the people present. (LinkedIn 27/2/2012)

A Canadian member of the professional group Leaders and Thinkers wrote:

"I am very glad you put the videos for us to help us think about what it is you would like for us to understand. It is very, very resourceful and helpful to challenging growth of oneself. Transformation can be very difficult, but that person is right. It is a very, very rewarding experience for you to change and to have others see you change based on how you are managing your life and concurrent to what role you have to play! Thank you so very much for sharing!" (LinkedIn 28/2/12)

A researcher and university educator from the Netherlands and a member of the professional group Teacher Training and Education wrote to me:

Hello William, thank you very much for offering a view into the Living Educational Theory and Living Theory Action Research. Instead of looking and working from a traditional pedagogic point of view, I'm much more interested in what goes on inside the teacher.

What interests me very much in your short explanation is that LET/LTAR constantly stimulate the researcher to witness 'the person' behind the teacher and his/her professional practice from a meta-awareness point-of-view, so from the

279

inside out. I consider the meta-awareness point-of-view a neutral (witness/0th person) position from where the greater connection can be monitored between different aspects of the person behind the teacher (observer/1st person), the teacher (spectator/3rd person) and his/her practice, all at the same time. Only from this 0th person point-of-view can one take full responsibility for all of these aspects of consciousness. Looking from this perspective introduces an "awareness with choice" as opposed to an "awareness without choice," which is what most people experience. The researcher can thus investigate how taking full responsibility for all of these aspects of consciousness helps one experience "free will", "inspiration", "creativity", "intuition" and a form of learning that is initiated from the inside out, which is what small children are completely in contact with.

Even when the present situation triggers the person behind the teacher to feel limited by conditioned responses from the past, can the researcher (or witness) "recognize and assume responsibility for being a 'living contradiction' in his/her professional practice" and allow one to act in such creative new ways as to "improve on what s/he has been doing." Thus constantly learning from what insights emerge from the inside out and connected with a learning that is offered from the outside. (LinkedIn 29/2/2012)

What these representative quotes demonstrate is evidence that Living Theory as an approach to action research resonated with many people who see action research as a means of promoting critical and humanistic education.

I was invited to present the findings of my thesis in the United Kingdom in an interactive one-hour presentation at Nottingham Trent University with a group of nineteen graduate students and four education faculty members and at Research Fest in

Lancaster, U.K., in front of 39 faculty members and PhD students. Both presentations resulted in feedback that TQ made sense to most participants as a way to understand the meaning of quality that was superior to the way it was understood by the British and American government's promoted understandings of educational quality as an almost exclusively quantitative concept.

I shared my new theory of quality, TQT, in America at education conferences and meetings in California, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Illinois, and Vermont and received mostly positive feedback through workshop attendee evaluation forms regarding the validity and significant implications the theory has for transforming the meaning of quality into a life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing educational concept.

One further media source I used for dissemination was adding the concept of TQT to Wikipedia. Admittedly, Wikipedia is not a necessarily a scholarly source of information, but it can be for the educated reader and seeker of information. Wikipedia is the largest general reference site available on the Internet, is readable in 283 languages, and has an estimated 365 million readers across the globe (*http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia, 2012*). I saw this as an excellent opportunity to reach a global audience. I have the detailed information regarding TQT in a queue for the site until the official publication of this thesis for reason of protecting the copyright of the information. In the modern day multimedia world, information is often stolen without giving credit to creators of knowledge and information. For this reason, the Wikipedia definition will appear after the publication of this thesis.

I wrote a scholarly journal article describing the research process of using living theory action research to create TQT and an overview of this thesis for the competitive international peer reviewed journal, *Educational Journal of Living Theories*

(EJOLTs.com). The title of the article is "Challenging the Status Quo: Introducing Transformational Quality (TQ) Theory," and it appears in the April/May 2012 issue.

My Claim to Original Contribution to Knowledge

TQT is original contribution knowledge because I synthesized ideas about the meaning of educational quality that had not been previously put together in a pragmatically applicable way for professional praxis. The originality of the thesis is also evidenced by my testing the existing knowledge about the meaning of educational quality in an original manner and the unique definition of educational quality I developed in the discipline of American public school leadership. Through living theory action research, I demonstrate in the thesis both how and why I improved the social and academic milieu of the school where I served as principal through collaborative inquiry. I demonstrate how I improved the learning of people both within the school in which I worked and through the dissemination of my research in understanding the meaning of quality in a transformational way.

Most days for the past five years I have checked the Internet through the search engines of Google, Yahoo, and Bing and the world's largest digital library of education ERIC (*http://www.eric.ed.gov/*), to see if anyone else in the world has developed an educational theory for the meaning of quality synonymous with my own. I searched under the keywords: *quality, quality education leadership, quality school principal, transformational quality, educational quality, and quality teaching and learning*. I did not find anyone who had developed a theory mirroring my own. This worldwide search through popular Internet search engines provided further evidence of my claim for originality in creating TQT.

Evaluation of the Living Theory Action Research Study

McNiff and Whitehead (2009) stated:

Most of us experience ourselves as a living contradiction when our values are denied in our practice (Whitehead, 1998). We can use our research as a means of overcoming the contradiction. This is often the starting point of an action enquiry. You ask, "How do I improve the situation here?" understanding that the way to improve a social situation is first to improve your own thinking and learning. (p.76)

The approach I used for evaluation was in accord with living theory action research as outlined by professor and founder of living theory Jack Whitehead and professor and action research expert Jean McNiff. There are three main tenets for evaluating the successful completion of a living theory action research project (McNiff and Whitehead, 2010):

1   Transformation of the self as a more congruent person in thinking, acting, and making decisions in regards to a person's values and beliefs

2   Influence and transform the learning of other people

3   Transform the social and academic milieu of the action research site

The standards of judgements I set for the thesis I outlined in chapters one and three were the following:

1   Evidence that my living theory of understanding and modelling education quality was tested by public scrutiny and found to be an effective map and guide for understanding how students, teachers, and coaches understand, experience, and model quality in the milieu of Potsdam High School

2   Evidence that the use of my living theory of understanding and modelling educational quality resulted in higher levels of student and teacher achievement, as evidenced by a reduction in the failure rate of freshman (year 14) students and incidents of conflict between students and their teachers and

coaches in the school community

3 Evidence that the use of my living theory of understanding and modelling educational quality resulted in transformation of my leadership practice so as to have fewer contradiction between my actions and decision and my values and beliefs

4 Evidence that the use of my living theory of understanding and modelling educational quality resulted in transformation of the social and academic milieu of the school

I believe the thesis clearly demonstrates that I have met all the standards of judgements comprehensively. The living theory action research project of the thesis was congruent with the "think-act-reflect cycles" (Schön, 1983) of action research to improve the social situation of the school I served as leader, and this was validated by the people I claimed to have influenced to improve in their learning, feedback from critical friends, and the substantial improvement in the social and academic milieu of Potsdam High School as evidenced in chapter four and five of the thesis. Based on my humanistic and critical approach to education leadership, it was essential that my use of TQT in professional praxis inspired students and teachers to question and challenge the *status quo* in ways that improved their learning, sense of meaning, and improved their performance academically, personally, and socially. I believe the data in the thesis support my claim that I was successful in this regard.

I am a transformed leader due to the rigorous living theory action research process I undertook in this thesis. I became a more skilled and reflective listener and communicator, was more attentive to the transformational quality needs of other people, and acted more often from my authentic sense of self. I improved my awareness when I was acting as a "living contradiction" and when I was immersed in narrative wreckage

and had to re-channel negative thoughts and energy into positive intentions. Most notably, I learned the power of being resilient in the face of great adversity by staying true to my values and beliefs.

I reflected on the study and came to the conclusion with TQT that I have created what I have dubbed a "Congruent Neuro-Linguistic Expression" (CNLE©) of educational quality. TQT empowered me to improve my capacity to be congruent between my neurological process (my thinking and intentions) and my linguistic utterances in a manner harmonious with what I was thinking and intending and how I communicated that thinking and intention to other people. Hence, my creation of CNLE© is an explanation of what TQT is as a philosophy of effective communication. This is reminiscent of a presupposition of neuro-linguistic programming (NLP), as discussed in chapter two, that the message received is "the message" regardless of intentions of the speaker or writer. Initially, this idea may seem contradictory to common education thought and practice in America and the United Kingdom. It is commonplace for a teacher, for instance, to be assessed as having taught his or her students well because information was accurately stated and cohesively presented in a logical and linear manner according to school-approved curriculum guidelines and objectives. What CNLE© illuminates for me is that teaching does not authentically occur if the people being "taught" do not learn. Quality teaching, therefore, does not occur unless it is verified by the learner. The American and U.K. model of pedagogy and curriculum favours a product-based curriculum where learning outcomes/objectives and assessment are the key criteria to student learning success or failure. It is not necessarily an assessment of a teacher's success or failure in teaching. In my two decades of experience with public education, the norm has been that as long as a teacher follows a product-based curriculum faithfully and stays on task in teaching toward predetermined outcomes/objectives, he or she is judged as competent. If

285

the teacher follows this formula and the student does not learn, the onus is on the student if he or she fails to learn because the teacher is assessed to have successfully taught.

A salient example of this information an article in the Denver Post: "DPS Teacher Evaluations Don't Mirror Quality," in the *Denver Post* (Meyer, 19/2/2010):

About 55 percent of Denver teachers believe teaching quality in the district is substandard, but that is rarely conveyed in evaluations, teachers surveyed by the New Teacher Project said: Almost 99 percent of all tenured teachers received "satisfactory" evaluations over a three-year period, the group — which focuses on improving teacher quality nationwide — reported in a detailed assessment of Denver Public Schools presented to the school board…

For example:

Sixty-two percent of teachers say the evaluation process fails to provide an accurate assessment of performance. Sixty percent of DPS teachers were told there is no area in which they must improve. Seventy percent of administrators and 30 percent of teachers said there were tenured "teachers in my school who should be dismissed for poor performance."

(http://www.denverpost.com/headlines/ci_14429983)

Another example of this strange phenomenon of assessing a teacher as having taught when student do not learn was clearly evident in Boston Massachusetts schools through an article in the *Boston Globe* titled, "Grade the Teachers—A Way to Improve Schools, One Instructor at a Time":

In Boston, which uses a satisfactory/unsatisfactory system, 97 per cent of all evaluated teachers received a satisfactory designation from 2003 through 2008. At 72 of the district's 135 schools, not a single teacher was given an unsatisfactory evaluation. Fifteen of these are on the state's list of chronically

underperforming schools. "This phenomenon where you get schools where year after year the kids are failing, and the teachers are all deemed to be great—that's not a recipe for improving learning for kids in poor neighborhoods," says Dan Weisberg, the policy director at the New Teacher Project. (Jonas, 1/11/2009)

My experience as an American public school teacher, assistant principal and principal was that the assessment of teaching competency was not usually directly related to student learning. It was directly related to competently following curriculum guidelines and staying on-task in demanding that students produce predetermined learning outcomes/products. If the student failed to meet the outcomes or create the learning products successfully, it was the student who was most often to blame. The teacher was most often still considered to have successfully "taught" and is traditionally judged as competent in teaching evaluations.

TQT as a guide to my leadership influenced me to define teaching as occurring when a student successfully learns. If a student does not learn as a result of instruction from a teacher, teaching did not occur through my understanding of TQT and CNLE. Instead, a presentation occurred. Teaching and presenting are two different concepts that often are misused interchangeably in the evaluation of teaching in American public high schools. TQT taught me that when I used the term "quality" in my leadership or teaching I could not be sure I used the term as a Congruent Neuro-Linguistic Expression© until verified by the person I claimed to have influenced to experience or produce quality. Consequently, equating teaching with successful learning by another person is a CNLE©. Equating the concept of teaching with presenting information regardless of the learning of another is an incongruent neuro-linguistic expression.

I actualized the idea of teaching and student learning as inextricably tied together in praxis by holding teachers accountable for student learning, not simply

presenting information successfully as outlined by curriculum guidelines and lesson plan objectives to present the information in a linear and orderly fashion. This resulted in my decision to change the head of academic departments in math, science, and English after one year as school principal. The former academic heads of these departments demonstrated a deep-seated belief that presenting and teaching were synonymous and that teaching occurred regardless of student learning. The teachers I assigned to take on the roles of departments heads of these subject areas demonstrated an understanding that teaching and learning are inextricably tied together and teaching only happens when another person learns. Without learning the teacher *presented* information he or she did not *teach* it. I made this change so as to have the teaching faculty who conceptualised presenting and teaching as synonymous be influenced by their colleagues who served as department heads to change their perception and come to see the incongruence of their position.

One salient example to demonstrate the positive change in PHS's academic milieu by using CNLE© was the removal of a teacher not only from his chairperson position, but also from teaching an advanced placement math course. Students could earn college credit if they passed an end-of-the-school-year test demonstrating competency in mathematical concepts. These were concepts students were supposed to have been taught and they were expected to have mastered by school year's end. An examination of the teacher's class for the past three years before I became principal showed that the teacher provided, on average, 85 per cent of his students the grade of an A (demoting excellence), ten per cent a grade of B (denoting good), and five per cent a grade of C (demoting satisfactory) for the class. No student received a mark less than satisfactory. In contrast, in the past three years, only nine of the 43 students he taught had passed the end-of-the-year test for college credit.

The teacher was a 30-year veteran, union representative, and highly respected in the local community as an outstanding math teacher, yet this was based on the high grades he gave his students. The fact that only 21 per cent of his students passed the competency test was never addressed with him before I became principal. When I asked the previous principal how this could happen, the answer I received was akin to, "He is a veteran teacher, students receive good grades, and parents like him." When I addressed the issue of the low percentage of students who passed a mathematical competency test for the class in which he was the teacher, he remarked, "I teach them according to the curriculum. It is their job to learn it. I am a quality teacher. Why do you think I am head of the department?" (Research Journal 2/6/07). I worked with staff to transform their understanding of teaching as inextricably linked to student learning and to identify the difference between being a teacher and being a presenter. From a TQ perspective, I sought to influence teachers to understand teaching as a CNLE© that was inextricably tied to student learning and not as a concept incongruent with what the essence of teaching is about: namely, learning.

The evidence that I was successful in influencing the academic milieu of the school to understand teaching and learning as inextricable concepts can be seen in the vast improvement in student formative and summative assessments of learning and a forty per cent increase in students' passing AP end-of-the-year competency tests in the year 2008.

It is important to note that understanding CNLE© in this way (where another is necessary to validate an expression of quality is congruent with neuro-linguistic utterances) is not necessarily applicable outside of the pedagogical practice of public school education. For instance, I may be talking to myself about an experience of transformational quality as I view a beautiful sunset over San Francisco Bay in

California where I live and no one else present, and I can validly make a CNLE©.

CNLE is a new way of looking at human intrapersonal and interpersonal communication. The idea of congruent neuro-linguistic communication (CNLE) is that the ideas and intention you have in your mind and soul are cogently expressed in your words, actions, and behaviour in a manner whereby others interpret your expressions of mind and soul congruently with the intention and meaning of your communication. Importantly, from an intrapersonal perspective, the intentions and meanings of your mind and soul are harmonious with the image you have of yourself.

TQT represents my most intimate intrapersonal and interpersonal understanding of quality. I did not know for myself the meaning of quality until officially interviewing 264 people, and unofficially talking to approximately 800 people over a five-year time period. For instance, speaking with taxi drivers in London, people on the streets of New York City, passengers on trains in Germany, people in restaurants in France and Ireland, people on a bus in Nottingham, and on the subway in San Francisco, I came to learn that my understanding of quality was not my own: it was shared between all of us. TQT accurately represents this understanding in a valid and reliable manner.

Most of the major school reform efforts I helped put in place through my use of TQT to guide my leadership and the path to further reforms were still in place as of February 2012. Notably, the principal who assumed my position was awarded "First-Year Principal of the Year" by the State Department of Education in 2009 based on the recommendation of the interim superintendent of schools, the success of the Freshman Academy, increased student success in the classroom, performance on state-mandated academic tests, the school's having a vibrant and need-fulfilling curriculum, improved student involvement in learning, and a decrease in student discipline issues). Admittedly, I viewed the awarding of my successor as bittersweet since he took full

credit for the reforms I brought to the school using TQT as my guide to action and decision making. Most important, however, was that the transformational quality reforms I worked on collaboratively with others to improve the learning of students and the school culture had been maintained after my tenure as the school leader ended.

The narrative wreckage of seeing another person receive the credit and awards for my work I have rechanneled into positive energy in the form of knowing I was blessed to have had the opportunity to participate in improving the lives of other people through transformation of the social and academic milieu of Potsdam High School. The school, in a short amount of time, was markedly improved from its impoverished state before I arrived as school principal.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Assessment of My Use of TQT as a Guide for

School Leadership and Visions for Future Research

The last chapter of the thesis discusses Effectiveness of Transformational Quality (TQ) theory as a guide for my school leadership and visions for future research about TQT to strengthen its validity, reliability, and usability in other fields and disciplines. In the first section of the chapter I revisit the fictional Agent Wiley, the trickster from chapter three of the thesis, who promised to return at the end of the action research project to serve as an assessor and validator. Agent Wiley's statements and general demeanour are taken from conversations I had with people or overheard from people talking about my leadership of PHS. As with chapter three, he is a fictional character who embodies a collective representation of my critics and of those who ardently believed the *status quo* of quality and tradition must be upheld at PHS.

In the second part of the chapter, I discuss my assessment of needs for further research regarding TQT and my vision for how these needs for further research can be best met. I end the chapter with concluding remarks about the research journey and process that resulted in my transformation as a leader.

Agent Wiley: Principal Barry, I heard on the radio you resigned your position as principal of Potsdam High School.

Principal Barry: Wow! News travels fast. I resigned only fifteen minutes ago. How did you know?

Agent Wiley: It was breaking news on the local radio station. They said you resigned suddenly, without warning, and were pursuing new opportunities.

Principal Barry: I felt it was the best choice for the good of the school and for me.

Agent Wiley: Are you surprised you failed? You tried to change the very foundation of the school's operations, traditions, and practices. Respectfully, the writing was on the wall. You cannot challenge the *status quo* head on and ever expect to triumph. Perhaps, you have learned that lesson and will change your ways in the future.

Principal Barry: Failure is a strong assessment. How do you feel I failed?

Agent Wiley: May I speak to you freely without offending you or hurting your feelings?

Principal Barry: Please do. I welcome the feedback.

Agent Wiley: Fair enough. I see you failed as a principal of Potsdam High School in primarily six ways. First, your students' test scores did not improve to a notable degree. Admittedly, they did not drop out, but you were hired to improve the scores of students on the state-mandated standardised academic achievement tests. Secondly, you are responsible for almost forty per cent of your staff's, mostly tenured teachers, resigning because of discipline issues you initiated or because people no longer wanted to work under your leadership. Thirdly, the board of education did not support you in your reform efforts and wanted you out. Fourthly, your reform efforts are reasons the superintendent was sacked and the director of special education was forced out of his job. Fifthly, you quit your job three months into the school year, putting your staff into a chaotic state. The sixth reason you failed is because the local and regional media in the state portrayed you a liberal leader with no respect for tradition and the well-being of veteran teachers and administration who had been at the school for decades. Honestly, you must see for yourself you failed and did so quite miserably. Again, sorry if it hurts to hear; however, you asked for honest feedback.

Principal Barry: I appreciate you honesty, and there is a kernel of truth in everything you said. I believe your assessment of failure is skewed, and, if you are willing to listen, I will tell you why.

Agent Wiley: You were willing to hear me out so I will offer you the same courtesy. Please help me understand how you possibly see your leadership as anything but a failure.

Principal Barry: Let us look at each of your points and assess the truth of each of them. Your first point was students' test scores did not improve to a notable degree. The plan I developed was improvement in scores over the next five years. Considering both the elementary school and middle school have been identified by the state as being in danger of being "failing" school due to test scores and the high school is not identified as such means we are overcoming the challenge of having students come to the high school with low performance on the tests. We may not have improved yet; however, we have improved slightly, and I believe the reforms we have in place will result in significant improvement in test scores over the next few years. We will have to wait and see if I am correct or not before you prejudge the reforms as a failure. Fair enough?

Agent Wiley: Okay, I will rescind that one. However, I doubt we will witness improvement. There is no evidence to support your optimism, in my opinion. Nevertheless, please continue.

Principal Barry: Your second point was that I was responsible for almost forty per cent of the staff's, mostly tenured teachers, resigning because of discipline issues I initiated or because people no longer wanted to work under my leadership. This claim is admittedly true. I question, though, to what degree was this was a failure of my leadership. Perhaps, it was both a success and a failure of my leadership.

Agent Wiley: I do not see how you cannot see it as a glaring failure of your leadership. You informed me of this Transformational Quality theory you developed to guide your leadership to improve the life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing social and academic milieu of the school community. I bet not one of the numerous teachers or sport coaches you forced out of the school would agree you acted in such a way. It seems your TQT was nothing more than eloquent rhetoric. Do you honestly believe any of the teachers or coaches that resigned because of your leadership think TQ is a valid theory to understand the meaning of quality?

Principal Barry: Interesting question, Mr Wiley. My answer to your question is, yes, they each believed in TQT as the way they conceptualised the meaning of quality. I know this from our interviews and discussion together. It was not a matter of TQT's being a valid way of understanding the meaning of quality; the dissonance emanated from how the meaning of transformational quality was best, or appropriately at the least, modelled. For instance, the baseball coach in our in our discussions demonstrated cognitively a belief in all the tenets of TQT and saw all the quadrants and dimensions of TQT as a valid understanding and conceptualisation of how he perceived quality. It was in the modelling of transformational quality the problems arose. The coach believed calling kids disrespectful names, embarrassing them publically, and demeaning them motivated student-athletes to deeper and more wide-reaching levels of quality. This is where the disciplinary actions arose that caused the teachers and coaches to resign. Teachers who professed a belief in the tenets of TQT did such things as call students "stupid" or "losers" in the belief such name-calling would inspire students to achieve quality in their academic performance. I worked arduously with these teachers and coaches to try to influence them to understand their modelling of quality was diametrically opposed to the understanding and conceptualization of quality in which they professed to believe. In this regard, I failed. Each of the people who resigned professed cognitive congruence with the tenets of TQT. I am looking to understand in the future how I can more effectively help people who model quality in ways diametrically opposed to their cognitive understanding. Hence, my creation of Congruent Neuro-Linguistic Expression (CNLE©) as a philosophical approach to help teachers and coaches use TQT more effectively in their practice. Does this resonate with you, Mr Wiley?

Agent Wiley: So you are saying you know best how to model transformational quality, and if other people do not agree with you force them out or seek to fire them?

Principal Barry: No and yes. My job as a school principal is to be the leader of the school and as such to assess and be responsible for people's demonstrating behaviours and making decisions in alignment with promoting educational quality. In this regards, it is my responsibility to address issues that deal with expressions and actions of staff and students that are diametrically opposed to the mission and vision of the school that is in alignment with the tents of TQT. In another way, my answer is no. I am a learner as well as a leader. I see the two positions as inextricable from each other, and I learn from other people how we can best understand and model transformational quality in our teaching, learning, and social interactions with each other in the school community.

Agent Wiley: Ultimately you failed to model TQT to the tenured teachers and sport coaches you influenced to resign.

Principal Barry: To a certain degree I did. However, is not a failure of TQT as a valid model of understanding the meaning of educational quality. Perhaps, it was partially a failure of my leadership and partially of failure of the people who resigned to take responsibility for improving their practice.

Agent Wiley: I am sure the people who resigned because of your leadership do not see it that way.

Principal Barry: I cannot control how people see things. I can only control my own actions and decisions and hope to influence positively the way other people see things. For instance, your third and fourth points that the board of education did not support my reform efforts and wanted me out, the director of special education's leaving and sacking the superintendent were not things I could not control. We led according to our values and beliefs, and we paid the price for it. There is always the risk of challenging the *status quo*. Of course, I wish I could have effectively influenced the board of education to support our reform efforts to embrace Transformational Quality as our vision for pedagogy and culture-building. However, I failed in this regard. I quit my job three months into the school year, and you are correct. I put the school staff into a chaotic state. This was an unavoidable situation because if I had continued as the principal I would have been put in more situations where my values and beliefs would have been denied in my leadership because of the interim superintendent's directing me to do things I found morally wrong and educationally unsound. My leaving optimised the chances the reform efforts we successfully implemented will last because of staff buy-in, and the new leadership will have a difficult time undoing the work the staff passionately supports. I planted and nurtured the seeds of effective change through the use of TQT, and now it is up the staff and students to help the reforms find roots and flourish.

Agent Wiley: Seems like you a running away from a fight and are making excuses to me.

Principal Barry: As I said earlier, I cannot control what other people think and do only my own thoughts and actions. I did what I believe was best for everyone, most notably for myself and for living in accordance with my values and beliefs and refusing to continue to deny my values and beliefs because of the directives of a new boss who was demanding I act in ways that violated my sense of self as a leader and as a human being.

Agent Wiley: How about my last point about your failure as a leader? The fact you failed because the local and regional media in the state portrayed you a liberal leader with no respect for tradition and the well-being of veteran teachers and administration who had been at the school for decades Was not it your responsibility to portray the school in a positive light and promote the school in the media?

Principal Barry: We spoke earlier about my values as a humanistic and critical leader. This required me to speak out against social injustice and inhuman treatment of people. My job was not to be a "spin doctor" and deceive people through the press that we were a school culture we were not when I arrived as the new principal. I spoke out against what I and the majority of staff and students saw as dysfunctional and wrong with the school and made a public commitment to meet the needs of the students and staff I served. Again, I cannot control what others think. I can only hope to influence other people. You are right, however. I failed to secure the media for the most part to support our reform efforts. We did have a couple of reporters who fairly reported our school reform efforts. Admittedly, these reporters were the exception and not the norm.

Agent Wiley: I guess we will have to agree to disagree about your success or failure as a leader in your tenure as principal of Potsdam High School. What now? What are your plans?

Principal Barry: I am going to enrol in the PhD program at Nottingham Trent University in the United Kingdom. I am going to write a thesis about my living theory, Transformational Quality theory, and how it impacted my leadership and the learning of other people and transformed the social and academic milieu of Potsdam High School. I am going to disseminate my findings across America and the world through presentations, articles, books, and videos. My life mission is now to live in accordance to my values and beliefs and influence other leaders and educators to embrace transformational quality as a more appropriate, democratic, and just way to understand, model, and conceptualise educational quality than the current *status quo* meaning of educational quality. I plan on co-creating an international company consisting of innovative, caring, and performance-enhancing leaders who are committed to challenging the socially unjust and undemocratic *status quo* of educational quality.

Agent Wiley: I wish I could wish you success. However, as a supporter of the *status quo* I can only wish your health and hope you will come to see things are the way they are because they are the ways things are supposed to be.

Principal Barry: It was interesting to meet you, Mr Wiley. Perhaps, we will meet again, and the next time I will be able to influence you successfully to challenge the *status quo*.

Agent Wiley: (a wry smile on his face) I doubt you will be able to do that. However, I have a feeling we will run into each again in the future when you earn your PhD and start the company you spoke of. Until then, be careful of challenging the *status quo*. You saw what happened when you did it on a small scale here in Potsdam. Imagine what could happen to you if you attempt to do this on a larger, global scale.

Principal Barry: I will leave you with the words of the former football coach, Jimmy Johnson, of the Dallas Cowboys, my favourite professional football team. I heard him once say in interview—I do not remember it word for word—but the general message was that life and winning come down to your philosophy. Do you want to be safe and good, or do you want to take a chance and be great? I choose to take a chance for greatness.

Agent Wiley: If you take that chance that means if you fail you forfeit the chance to be safe and good? Why risk it? Safe and good are what the *status quo* tries to protect. Perhaps, you should rethink your philosophy before it is too late.

Principal Barry: Greatness to me means living in accordance to my humanistic and critical values and beliefs and being a life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing person to myself and towards other people in my professional and personal life. This is the greatest good in life, and I choose this path over safety. As my hero Paulo Freire said, "We are here in the world to change it, not to keep it the same." Goodbye, Mr Wiley. Until we meet again.

Principal Barry extended his hand for a handshake.

I shook his hand firmly and said, "Goodbye Mr. Barry. And for some reason, I am sure once you earn you PhD and start your company we will meet again."

Principal Barry: I have a feeling we will too.

Feedback from My Critical Friends after the Conclusion of the Action Research Project

Two of my critical fiends wrote to me an assessment of my use of TQT and my leadership after my resignation. The first was the school psychologist a year and a half later in June 2009. The following is an excerpt from her letter.

While you are no longer the principal of Potsdam High School, you are greatly missed by a vast majority of the staff. You came to Potsdam High School with a charismatic attitude and a desire to change the out-dated structure of the school. You dedicated yourself and soon gained the trust of students as well as staff at the school. You embody the essence of Potsdam High School. You are knowledgeable, compassionate, empathetic, and have a passion for creating an atmosphere that is conducive to learning in a fun, artistic, and creative way. You displayed outstanding leadership qualities and undoubtedly made a commitment to the children of Potsdam while being the school principal. You worked daily to create a safe and educationally sound school climate for both staff and students which included both high expectations for students and staff as well as dedication. You are a highly enthusiastic and inventive school leader. You took old ideas and transformed them into fresh, new ideas. You worked closely with guidance staff to create new meaningful curriculum and class schedules that met the needs of students and aligned with State standards of academic and social expectations form State education authorities.

Notably, when a student felt success, you demonstrated you felt that success through your presence of being. When I witnessed a student felt challenged or hurt as a school psychologist, I could clearly see you felt challenged and hurt as well. You immersed yourself emotionally as well as physically onto the Potsdam school culture and all it had to offer the staff, students, students, parents, and community. When challenging issues arose, as they routinely did, you made sure you came to a conclusion to satisfy all who were involved. You remained attentive, active, patient and understanding of questions and welcomed any concerns anyone had. You showed yourself to be an ardent child advocate throughout your tenure as school principal. Your interpersonal skills with the students, parents, and staff at the high school were extraordinary as well as demonstrating generosity and kind-heartedness.

You initiated, through collaborative means, a unique Freshman Academy. While many staff members questioned the reality and pragmatics of this initiative, you researched, composed, and outlined through your TQ model the program and curriculum to a staff that would come to embrace a successful Freshman Academy that survived in spite of your resignation. The Freshman Academy you initiated was featured in the local and State newspapers as being as glaring success and confirmed it brought a different and improved level of success to Potsdam High School first year students. The Freshman Academy, now over a year and a half after your departure, has proven to be enormously successful! Grades, attendance, and behavioral issues have decreased significantly from the past year and provide these first year students a promising high school career with imperative foundations now being set in a way that did not exist before your leadership. This would not have been possible without your leadership and articulation of transformational quality and your knowledge and passion to set forth such an initiative.

In closing, Billy, you made a significant impact at Potsdam High School with your passionate belief we needed to transform our school's understanding of educational quality. You demonstrated a unique ability to work effectively with other people in the school community from all walk of life as well as being extremely positive to the needs of the children of our school and committed yourself to the betterment of the town. You always took the time to listen to students' concerns and were firm, yet likeable in your delivery of educational services. You shared through your dedication to transformational quality your time with staff and students a commitment to promote the happiness of everyone involved (Personal letter 2/6/2009)

The Director of Special Education for the Potsdam School District (and a former school superintendent in another state previous to this position), who served as one of

my critical friends, wrote the following assessment of my TQT approach to school leadership after I told him I was going to resign my position:

"Mr. Barry is, in fact, the best principal that I have ever had the occasion to work with in my more than forty years as an administrator, including my years as a Superintendent before retirement…He is very knowledgeable about the curriculum, effective teaching strategies, special education laws, teacher supervision and finances of the school. He manages the budget with a careful distribution of his limited funds. We have worked closely together on the Professional Development Committee for the District, the Accountability and Standards Committee and the Administrative Council. He has been a great contributor to the growth and well-being of the students in the district, and uses data from a variety of sources including testing to make informed decisions.

He is especially adept at building rapport with students and parents-even the angry ones, and always makes decisions for the benefit of students. He has been particularly helpful in dealing with many intricate special education problems due to his extensive knowledge of both the laws and effective alternative teaching strategies for students who learn differently or have problems to overcome…He is truly gifted in his communication with others, and I have told him so.

It has been said a good administrator is the one who can see the "train wreck" coming. Mr. Barry knows his students, parents, and his staff and he know the laws, curriculum, and effective teaching strategies. He is an experienced administrator who knows which issue will become serious problems if not dealt with properly, and he effectively deals with them involving team members as necessary.

> Potsdam school district unfortunately will lose a dedicated, loyal, creative, and experienced administrator when he leaves, one who works hard for every student, especially those not doing well" (Excerpt from letter 2008).

The juxtaposition between my critical friends and my critics as embodied in the fictional Agent Wiley presents an intriguing scenario. From the perspective of those who advocated questioning, challenging, and overturning an impoverished *status quo* of the academic and social milieu of Potsdam High School, I served as a value-driven, consistent leader in my promotion of transformational quality as an academic and social norm. I demonstrated I was dedicated to life-affirming the staff, students, parents, community members, and my colleagues. I tried always to interact with others in – affirming, need-fulfilling and performance-enhancing manner.

Agent Wiley, the embodiment of the *status quo* and of critics of my dedication to transformational quality theory as a guide to school leadership, often viewed me as a bully who showed disdain for tradition, veteran tenured teachers, and core American values such as freedom of speech and privacy. I was seen as a liberal, if not socialist, leader who valued equality at the expense of those who should be treated as elite and hold special privilege because of popularity and intelligence (as measured by state mandated standardised academic scores, IQ, and classroom grades), as had been the *status quo* at PHS.

Visions for Future Research of Transformational Quality Theory and its Application in Professional Praxis

Further research is needed to discover ways to improve congruence between people's understanding of transformational quality and their modelling of quality in

306

their everyday professional practice and interactions with other people. I envision two ways to approach this need in future research.

A quantitative analysis system is needed to assess and record how a person intends to influence and experience quality and a system for illustrating the results of these intentions based on the input of the person with the intentions, the people influenced by the person, and the product of the process. This would require a computer programmer and statistician to create a computer application which could produce reports which demonstrate the "intention, process, product" cycle a person took in attempting to influence other people, or themselves, to experience, observe, and/or attain transformational quality in a specific quadrant and dimension.

I see the creation of such a quantitative computer application as being essential for TQT to be used on a widespread scale across different industries such as education, business, and sport management. Leaders require a way to demonstrate to others how using a TQT approach influenced and impacted a particular product development, achievement, or addressed a need for improvement. What TQT as a guide for leadership and pedagogy lacks at this point is a systematic, quantitative way (for pragmatic purposes) to measure success on a large scale, needs for improvement, and where in the process of improvement more concentration and attention is required.

I do not see this as a weakness at this point in time, but rather as a necessary evolution of TQT to be used in a wider context and to address the needs of larger schools and organisations with multiple native and technical languages embodied within their milieu.

The second vision I have for further research using TQT has already been initiated. Partnering with a successful venture capitalist and respected leader in an international pharmaceutical company, We created a leadership and learning consulting

company based on the core tenets of TQT and CNLE©. The name of the company is Living Leadership Today, L.L.C. (livingleadershiptoday.co.uk). A Web shot of the company's homepage illustrates the importance of TQT in the company's vision and mission (livingleadsershiptoday.com):

Living Leadership Today ™

Transforming Lives, Learning and Leadership

We are a vibrant international consulting group of PhD academics, executive and sport performance coaches, leaders in the Biotech industry, physicians, and psychologists promoting quality as a life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing concept.

Our approach is based on the principal that quality partnerships between people provide the bases for achieving extraordinary results. We believe the difference between a good team, workplace, or organization and a great one is the strength, passion, and loyalty of its people. Since all organizations and cultures are products of its members and how the members think and interact with one another, we have developed our expertise to address the building of collective resonance directly. This enables individuals, teams, and organizations to be more productive, more adaptive, more self-correcting, and more flexible. As a result, individuals who make up the workplace emerge from our programs and coaching more self-aware, leaders make wiser systemic decisions, and teams collaboratively

accomplish strategic and personal goals.

To build quality relationships and collective resonance, we promote sustainable change that increases productivity and performance via our Transformational Quality Model, C.A.P.A.C.I.T.Y. © in the following key areas:

• Academic

• Sport Coaching, Management, and Nutrition

• Business

• Building and Sustaining Effective Relationships

We utilize a breakthrough approach based on the fundamental assumption that there is always a leap in quality and performance available far beyond our clients' awareness. We are experts at finding and engineering these results.

Thank you for your interest. Our site is currently under development with a launch date of autumn 2012.

Maria Gomez, Founder and CEO

Contact Information: e-mail: *livingleadership2day@gmail.com*

The company will explore further research into how TQT can be used to improve the life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing academic and social milieu of schools. The company will also be exploring research opportunities to assess the viability of using TQT in contexts beyond education, namely in the business,

sports management, and medical fields.

Concluding Thoughts

I think back to my first encounter with quality as a source of passion in my life when I was living alone in small two-room log cabin in Chugach State forest in Alaska working as a Park Ranger assistant at the age of twenty-two. Reading Robert Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (1974) while sitting out on the front steps of the cabin a surrounded by majestic mountains spotted with hanging glaciers, I became infected with an unquenchable desire to understand better the meaning of quality in my life and the lives of others and how to achieve, recognize, foster, conceptualise and promote it better. I would never have guessed I would find myself twenty years later finishing a PhD thesis on quality and being part of an international company that seeks to bring a passion for quality to people around the globe. It is further evidence to me personally be there is no such thing as coincidence and there is a pattern of meaning in this holonomic world in which I live and travel. I was inspired by a personal passion of discovery in understanding the meaning of quality and equally inspired by the validation received from other people in the acceptance of my ideas about quality culminating in the creation of TQT.

I am a transformed leader and human being because of the journey taken through the experience of the research depicted in this thesis. I more fully realise the influence and impact my existence has on other people: their learning, sense of meaning and worth, and being cared about. I am attuned to my responsibility of transforming the social formations of the places in which I work and live to be life-affirming, need-fulfilling, and performance-enhancing environments. TQT may have an academic perspective, but it is my life mission to live in accordance with it as I explore the richness, beauty, tragedy, and curiosity of being a human being on the planet earth.

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Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PLEASE READ THIS FORM BEFORE YOU DECIDE

TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

PURPOSE OF INFORMED CONSENT: The purpose of informed consent is to assure you the information you share will be kept confidential. Your name will appear as a pseudonym in the dissertation and in any research reports or published articles. If you are willing to have your name appear in the dissertation, or other published articles or reports, I will make available to you a written draft copy of any potential publication where your name may be used.

WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO: You are invited to participate in an interactive interview. The interview will be audio tape-recorded for purposes of transcription. The audio recording will be erased after the transcription is complete. The interview is based on open ended questions about your knowledge, understanding and experience about the meaning of quality to you, most notably as it relates to American public high school education. You will receive a copy of the transcribed interview, as well as a brief summary of my interpretations, at your request.

TIME REQUIRED: Approximately one hour.

RISKS: There are no risks expected from participating in this study.

COMPENSATION: No compensation will be given as a result of participating in the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your identity will be kept confidential. Your name will not be used in any publication without your prior approval.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You have the right to withdraw from the study at

any time.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me

or my university department:

Researcher: William J. Barry, Ph.D. student, Nottingham Trent University, School of Education, Research Cluster: Social Change, Justice, and Equality. Address: 8 Azalea Lane, San Carlos, California, 94070

University: School of Education, Nottingham Trent University, Clifton campus, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, U.K.

AGREEMENT

I voluntarily agreed to participate in the Ph.D. study and received a copy of this form.

Participant Name: _____   Date: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Mailing address (if you want a summary of the research findings):

_____

_____   Date _____

Appendix B

Semi-Structured Interview Questions and Protocol

Good morning/afternoon. Thank you for your time with me today to discuss how we can come to understand the meaning of quality with more clarity and in a way meaningful to you. Your role in the interview/dialogue process is as a co-investigator. Together, we are seeking to understand the meaning of quality, how we come to know it when we experience it or observe it, and the potential educational applications of it from our discussion.

For your privacy, all information received from you will be kept confidential as to the source and your identity will be protected. All data will be stored on a password-protected computer that I am solely privy to. In the research, the data you provide will be kept confidential with pseudonyms. In the reporting of data in published material, any information that may identify you will be altered to ensure your anonymity.

The interview is designed to minimise potential risks to you as a participant. If at any time you have concerns or question, please let me know so I can be of service to you

Questions

1   When I say the word quality what words, pictures, or ideas immediately come to mind?

2   What does quality mean to you? Do you believe most people have this same definition? Why/why not.

3   How is quality modelled in public high school education? In the management of the high school? In the sports and extracurricular programs? In the community?

4   What things do you do in your personal life that you experience quality

most often? What experiences in your life here at school you experience quality most often?

5 Please describe for me a quality experience? What does it look like? Sound like? Feel like? What is your sense of self and time during a quality experience?

6 What does quality teaching mean to you?

7 What does quality learning mean to you?

8 What does quality knowing mean to you?

9 Dr. William Glasser is a psychiatrist who states that we all have five basic fundamental quality needs as human beings. These are love, power, fun, freedom, and survival. Do you agree with his findings? Why/why not?

10 What is optimal experience in your opinion? When do you mostly experience optimal experience? Why are these optimal experiences for you? How is the meaning of quality related or not to your concept of optimal experience?

11 Does there exist, from your perspective, any problematic understandings of quality in your school/community? If so, why do you think they exist and what could be done to improve the meaning of quality?

12 How do you try to improve the amount of quality experiences you experience? What are the major barriers to you experiencing quality in your daily professional and personal life? How could these barriers be overcome in your opinion?

13 Do you agree quality is definable by grades, class rank and standardised test scores in public high schools? If so, why? If not, why not?

14 Do school report cards accurately represent the meaning of quality

learning? Why/why not?

15   What ideas do you have on how we could improve reporting the meaning of quality of teaching and learning beyond the traditional report card and student transcript? Or, is the traditional report card and student transcript sufficient?

16   Do you believe separating students in homogeneous groups for learning according to perceived intelligence promotes quality teaching and learning? Please explain.

17   How would you define quality for public high schools if you had the opportunity to define it?

18   How important is quality in your professional life? Personal life? Please explain.

These questions served as anchors for the semi-structured interviews and were meant to spark dialogue about the meaning of quality in ways participants wanted to explore.

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Derrida books about him