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Teacher Perceptions On Teacher Leadership And Shared Vision In NC Schools: A Correlational Study Using The NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey

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Teacher Perceptions on Teacher Leadership and Shared Vision in NC Schools:
A Correlational Study Using the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey

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North Carolina A&T State University

A dissertation proposal submitted to the graduate faculty

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department: Leadership Studies

Major Professor: Dr. Forrest Toms

Greensboro, North Carolina

2014

The Graduate School
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University

This is to certify that the Doctoral Dissertation of

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Greensboro, North Carolina
2014

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my greatest inspiration, my biggest cheerleader, my strongest prayer warrior, and my amazing mother, Gloria S. Hemphill. From the moment I made my debut to the world, you always encouraged me to do and be my best. For that, I am forever grateful, and I thank you for setting such high expectations for my life's work.

I will always treasure the deep love for books that you planted in me as an infant. There was never a shortage of literature in our home, and you read to me from the day I was born. While I did not understand what a huge impact this would have on my life then, I am so appreciative of your passion to share your love of books with me.

Reading and writing was our playtime growing up. I would write you and Dad the best letters growing up, and you kept every last one of them. Those are memories that will stay etched in my memories for many, many years to come.

From Corduroy to Anne of Green Gables, and from playing school in the living room with Karen to the first day of opening my very own school as principal, you have been there right beside me Mama Dukes. For all of the game boards, bookmarks, animal projects, and papers we completed together, I just want to say thank you for being the best mother ever. For all of the talks, tears, laughs, and prayers, thank you for allowing God to use you to help me find and fulfill my purpose.

In the famous words of Rosalind Russell from our favorite movie, *Auntie Mame*, "Live! Life's a banquet and most poor suckers are starving to death!" Thank you, Mom for showing me how to live a life worth living.

Biographical Sketch

Mary Michelle Hemphill is a native of Hickory, North Carolina. Having graduated from Hickory High School, she went on to attend Meredith College in 2005 as a North Carolina Teaching Fellow. During her sophomore year at Meredith, Mary studied in Puerto Rico as an exchange student at the University of the Sacred Heart in San Juan and pursued a double major in Education and Spanish and a license in Elementary Education. Mary returned to Meredith her junior year and was elected as Senate Chair, representing the judicial branch of the Student Government Association (SGA). In 2004, Mary was elected the second Black Student Government Association president in the history of Meredith College and served as SGA President her senior year.

Following her tenure at Meredith, Mary returned to Southwest Elementary School in Hickory – the same school she attended as a child. She spent five years teaching third and fourth grade, and soon began the Masters of School Administration program through Western Carolina University. Mary completed her Masters program in July 2010, and was blessed with the position of Assistant Principal at Statesville High School in Statesville, NC.

On July 1, 2013, Mary was appointed as principal of Elizabeth Duncan Koontz Elementary School in Salisbury, NC. Named after the first Black female president of the North Carolina Association of Educators and the head of the Women’s Bureau within the United States Secretary of Labor, Elizabeth Duncan Koontz Elementary has experienced successful transformation under Ms. Hemphill’s leadership.

Mary served as the Director of the Leadership 2000 Program for five years through Hickory Public Schools and worked with over 300 high school students to guide them through three years of internships in the non-profit, government and private business sectors in greater Catawba County. She has also served as a member of the Teaching Fellows Advisory Council

through the Department of Public Instruction and was awarded the Courageous Leadership Award through her service and scholarship to the MSA Program through Western Carolina University. She is an inductee and member of Alpha Delta Kappa, Gamma Eta Chapter for outstanding educators, and has also been awarded for her service and scholarship to Rowan County by the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc.

Mary's literary endeavors include her first publication, *Educational Leaders in a Multicultural Society* in which she authored the foreword with her doctoral professor, Dr. Abul Pitre. Ms. Hemphill also produced and developed the DVD, e-tools and ancillary instructional materials that accompany the book and is the first interactive DVD published by Cognella Academic Publishing of University Readers in San Diego, CA.

Mary attends Greater Faith Missionary Baptist Church in Hickory, NC where she serves as the Minister for Performing Arts. She is the daughter of William and Gloria Hemphill of Hickory, NC and has one sister, Karen Hemphill of Charlotte, NC who is a Johnson & Wales graduate and licensed pastry chef.

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I consider myself supremely blessed to be surrounded by the family, friends, scholars, teachers, and leaders that God has placed in my life along my personal and professional journey. Each and every individual has deposited into my intellectual and spiritual reservoir, and I am eternally grateful.

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In addition to my graduate committee I want to thank Dr. Louie Ross for his willingness to motivate students like myself to embrace a love for quantitative scholarship. Thank you, Dr. Ross for accompanying me through this world of quantitative inquiry and research. I very much appreciate your patience this past semester and embracing my vision.

Through my doctoral studies, I have been blessed with the friendship and support from such individuals as: Dr. Margaret Brunson, Dr. Nadielka Bishop, Peter Blutreich, Maurice Ferrell, Dr.

Jacque Jacobs, Dr. Frederick Buskey, Dr. Lynn Moody, Dr. Julie Morrow, Alesia Burnette, Traci Fox, and Shannon Moody.

Finally, to my forever sweet and understanding significant other, Friedrich M. Reid, thank you for being a rock these past two years. Your consistency and unwavering faith have been a true testament to the meaning of love and friendship. Thank you.

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Abstract

As the landscape of public education continues to evolve, so does the leadership and vision required to meet the needs of this ever-changing academic platform. No longer is academic research focusing solely on school leadership required to lead 21st century students and educators toward success, but rather it is focused on the plethora of factors that inform the development of thriving learning communities across our nation. While much of the educational discourse on leadership and vision speaks to the development of strategies, pedagogies, and leadership preparation for school leaders, there are deficiencies in the literature on teacher leadership and shared vision based on the perceptions of teachers. There is a gap in the educational research and scholarship where quantitative analyses on teacher perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision across specific states are concerned.

The purpose of this explanatory correlational study was to determine any relationship between background demographic variables (e.g. total years of employment, total years employed at current school, school position, and organization type) and teacher perceptions of the teacher leadership with shared vision as a control variable through a secondary data analysis of the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS). The study sample population consisted of N=16,383 teacher and other staff respondents to the 2012 NCTWCS.

The study results indicated that there was no statistical significance based on the correlation coefficients between total years employed as an educator and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership. The results did confirm, however, that there was statistical significance between total years employed at the current school and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership. The resulting analysis confirmed that there was also statistical significance between school position and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership in NC schools. Finally, the data affirmed that the nature of the relationship between total years employed as an educator and shared vision

was statistically significant, and that for every year employed as an educator, there was an increase in shared vision.

The findings of this study exemplified the need for further research regarding teacher perceptions of teacher leadership and the implementation of shared vision at the school and district level. **(Keywords: learning community, shared vision, teacher leadership, teacher working conditions, transformational leadership)**

Chapter I

Introduction

As the landscape of public education continues to evolve, so does the leadership and vision required to meet the needs of this ever-changing academic platform. “Most school organizations are facing a dynamic environment characterized by rapid social changes, educational policies, and globalization” (Hsiao & Chang, 2011, p. 621). No longer is academic research focusing solely on school leadership required to lead our 21st century students and educators toward success, but rather it is focused on the plethora of factors that inform the development of thriving learning communities across our nation. Lambert (2002) purports that the traditional model of formal, one-person leadership leaves the substantial talents of teachers largely untapped. Neumann, Jones, and Webb (2012) further convey that if teachers are to be educated participants of transformation and change, then teacher educators have a responsibility to inform teachers about how the use of leadership practices play out in political spheres of education reform. If “transformational leadership by teachers does exist in the classroom where effective teaching is practiced,” then by focusing on the development and sustainability of teacher leadership as a potential transformational change agent, this construct could serve to inform the state of learning communities in North Carolina (Treslan, 2006, p.62).

This study seeks to examine the relationship between teacher perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision as factors that contribute to the development of NC schools as learning communities. For this reason, there is a need to understand how teachers perceive these constructs within the context of NC schools based on an analysis of the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS). The first chapter presents the statement of the problem along with a conceptual framework to navigate the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, definitions of key terms utilized throughout, and notes some limitations and delimitations of the

study. The chapter concludes by describing this study's significance to educational research and discourse.

Statement of the Problem

In order to glean perspective on leadership constructs and reform as they exist in schools today, educational research has lent a proverbial ear to understanding not only how teachers perceive their working conditions, but also how their interpretations of shared vision can lead to the overall success of the learning community. "At the most general level, working conditions for teachers are influenced by the physical features of the work place, the organizational structure, and the sociological, political, psychological and educational features of the work environment (Ladd, 2009, p.6). While teachers' perceptions of their working conditions may differ from the objective reality, any systematic external evaluation of these perceptions gives the evaluator a glimpse at the biases and notions that exist within that particular learning community.

North Carolina represents an excellent state for this study of working conditions, as perceived by teachers. Not only is it a large and diverse state, but it also has made available to researchers extensive administrative data on student, teacher, school and district characteristics. In addition, it is the first state to have administered a statewide survey of working conditions to all teachers and administrators (Ladd, 2009, p.14).

The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS), a statewide survey of teacher working conditions is conducted on a biennial basis. Its exhaustive inventory based on school conditions in five areas - time, empowerment, leadership, facilities and resources – allows school leaders, teacher leaders, support staff, district personnel, and community stakeholders to derive knowledge about NC schools, its leaders, and the perspective of those who work there.

"The concept of a shared vision in many schools [is] often misunderstood and confused

with a limited focus” (Huffman & Hipp, 2000, p. 13). Shared vision defines outcomes that are valued in a learning community and must have a moral purpose for its constituents. Deal and Peterson (1999) contend that shared vision defines outcomes that are valued and shape how energy and time are allocated. In 2009, researchers Sheppard and Brown conducted a longitudinal study utilizing a teacher survey instrument which measured shared vision; teaching and learning; collaboration; and dialogue as organizational learning factors. The results yielded that from year one to year four teachers’ perceptions of shared vision not only significantly increased, but that teachers’ perceptions indicated that there was a clear plan for moving toward the school vision (p. 56). An effective vision presents a credible, yet realistic picture of the organization that inspires the participants to reach for a future goal.

While much of the educational discourse on leadership and vision speaks to the development of strategies, pedagogies, and leadership preparation for school leaders, there are deficiencies in the literature on teacher leadership and shared vision based on the perceptions of teachers. According to Anderson (2008), “Transformational leadership and teacher leadership are not new in our literature, however transformational leadership is rare and transformational leadership by teachers is almost unknown” (p. 8). There exists a plethora of research and empirical articles related to shared vision based on developing a 21st century approach to technology in schools and quality of life in healthcare. There also exist numerous qualitative approaches to teacher perceptions through surveys, interviews, and case studies on instructional leadership in learning communities. There is a gap in the educational research and scholarship where quantitative analyses on teacher perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision across specific states are concerned. North Carolina comes with its own specific set of needs and concerns as it relates to developing thriving learning communities to meet the needs of the students in this state.

Conceptual Framework

According to Mitchell and Sackney (2001), “to develop, nurture, and sustain a community of learners means creating a different culture that includes a shared vision, true collaboration, administrator and teacher leadership, and conditions that support these efforts” (p. 2). In order to conceptualize a holistic understanding of teacher perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision in NC schools, four major constructs are analyzed: transformational leadership, teacher leadership, shared vision, and schools as learning communities.

Transformational leadership. Within this conceptual framework, the researcher proposes that transformational leadership and the tenets therein, are intricately woven into the fabric of NC schools as learning communities. Transformational leadership enhances an organization by raising the values of its members, motivating them to go beyond self interest to embrace organizational goals, and redefining their needs to align with the organizational mission (Ross & Gray, 2006). School leaders who motivate faculty and staff to develop a deep understanding of the school’s overall mission and vision to educate all students, helps them re-evaluate their own biases and values (Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003). This type of transformational leadership allows the school leader to articulate a strong vision of curriculum and instruction, emotional and social well-being for students, and also mobilizes faculty and staff to buy in to the vision. Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbeck (1999) identified eight dimensions of transformational leadership as (a) identifying and articulating a vision, (b) fostering the acceptance of group decision making goals, (c) providing an appropriate role model, (d) high performance expectations, (e) providing individual support, (f) proving intellectual stimulation, (g) contingent reward, and (h) management by exception. Through focus on a single vision and group consensus that moves the learning organization forward, transformational leadership

serves to undergird the purpose of this study to learn more about the state of teacher leadership and shared vision in NC schools. In addition, this particular study deals with the NCTWCS which is based on teacher attitude data, and there is substantial educational research which purports that transformational leadership is a stronger predictor of teacher beliefs and practices than transactional leadership (Koh, Steers, & Terborg, 1995).

Teacher leadership. Neumann, Jones, and Webb (2012) argue that “it is vital to disrupt the discourse that promotes the idea that principals or those outside the teaching profession as the definers of instructional knowledge” (p.3). Teacher leadership speaks not only to the essence of developing and carrying out a shared vision within a school, but also promotes teachers as critical players in the development of thriving learning communities. Day et al. (2003) offered insight on the four dimensions of teacher leadership as the strengthening of classroom practice; encouraging teacher ownership in the change process; assuming the mantle of teacher expert; and engaging in collegiality for mutual learning. Neumann et al. (2012) goes on to say that all teachers are leaders by the sheer action of their work which is evidenced by the seven specific teacher leadership construct variables in the NCTWCS including: recognition as educational experts; trust to make sound professional decision about instruction; reliance to make decisions about educational issues; encouragement to participate in school leadership roles; effective processes for making group decisions to solve problems; taking steps to solve problems; and finally, teachers as effective leaders in the school. As professional development leaders, teacher leaders work to develop and maintain an inclusive school culture who foster staff development and work with others to solve problems (Neumann et al., 2012).

Shared vision. Shared vision speaks directly to a teacher’s ability and tolerance for change as well as a teacher’s leadership capacity within the learning organization. Deal and Peterson (1999) contend that shared visions define what “actions ought to occur; they motivate

staff and students by signaling what is important and what will be rewarded; they steer the allocation and distribution of resources, depending on what is considered important or valuable” (p. 26). Shared vision within a learning environment ensures that all stakeholders in a child’s education are focused on a central goal or mission as well as the means of achieving that goal. Similarly, Sheppard and Brown (2009) highlight the centrality of shared visions in professional learning communities by contending that, “There is no such thing as a 'learning organization,' [rather, learning organizations refer to a process where constituents] are taking a stand for a vision, for creating a type of organization [they] would truly like to work within and which can thrive in a world of increasing interdependency and change (p. 43). Within the conceptual framework, shared vision serves to direct the expectations of not only the learning environment, but also the teacher leaders carrying out this vision in the classroom. Senge (1990) affirms this notion when he relays that “you cannot have a learning organization without a shared vision” (p. 209). A shared vision in a learning community presents a credible, yet realistic picture of the organization that inspires the students, teacher leaders, and school leaders to work collaboratively to reach for the same future goal.

Schools as learning communities. Dufour and Eaker (1998) purport that what separates a learning community from an ordinary school is its collective commitment to guiding principles that articulate what the people in the school believe and what they seek to create. Huffman and Hipp (2012) further offer that “these guiding principles are not just articulated by those in positions of leadership; even more important, they are embedded in the hearts and minds of people throughout the school (p. 25). Teacher perceptions of teacher leadership offer insight into critical players in a learning community who manifest and translate the shared vision within a school. Ladd (2009) offers that working conditions emerge as highly predictive of teachers’ stated intentions to remain in or leave their school, with leadership emerging as the most

significant dimension. This particular study hopes to offer insight on the perception of teacher leadership along with shared vision in order to offer a critical outlook on the state of NC schools as learning communities.

“To develop, nurture, and sustain a community of learners means creating a different culture that includes a shared vision, true collaboration, administrator and teacher leadership, and conditions that support these efforts” (Mitchell & Sackney, 2001).

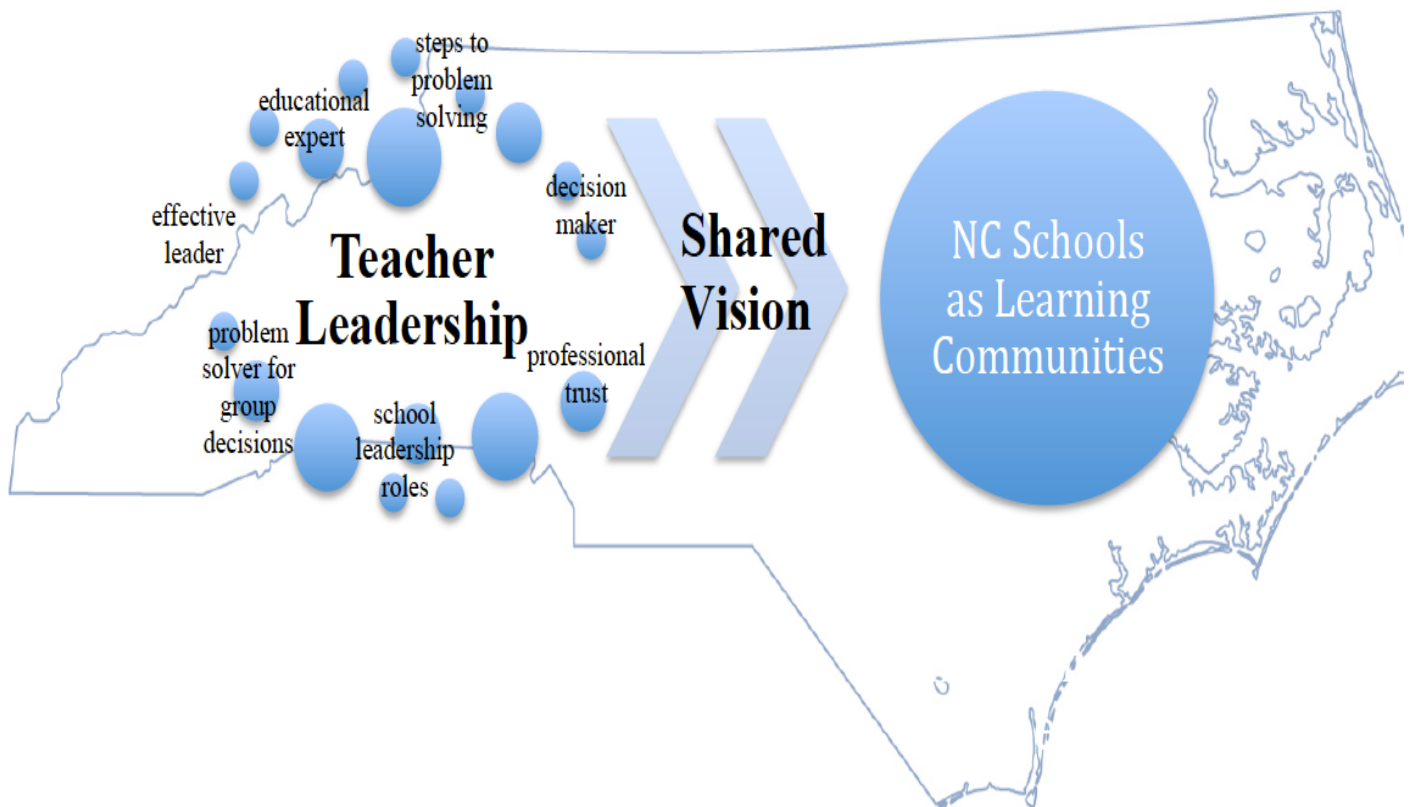


Figure 1.
Conceptual framework for *Teacher Perceptions of Teacher Leadership and Shared Vision in NC Schools: A Correlational Study Using the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey*

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this explanatory correlational study is to determine any relationship between background demographic variables (e.g. total years of employment, total years

employed at current school, school position, and organization type) and teacher perceptions of the teacher leadership with shared vision as a control variable through a secondary data analysis of the NCTWCS. A secondary data analysis will be conducted using the NCTWCS which examines teacher attitude data on various constructs including teacher leadership and school leadership as it pertains to the implementation of shared vision within a school. This type of analysis will allow the researcher to determine the correlation between background demographic variables and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership with shared vision as a possible control variable.

Research Questions

The research questions for this explanatory correlational study are as follows:

1. How do demographic variables effect the relationship between teacher perceptions of teacher leadership in NC schools?
 - a. What is the relationship between total years of employment and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership in NC schools?
 - b. What is the relationship between years of employment at the present school and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership in NC schools?
 - c. What is the relationship between school position and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership in NC schools?
 - d. What is the relationship between type of school (e.g. public vs. charter/special school) and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership in NC schools?
2. What is the difference, if any, between school position (e.g. teachers and all other positions) and teacher leadership when controlling for shared vision and other variables in the model for NC schools?

Definition of Terms

Learning community. A collective unit committed to the guiding principles that articulate what the people in the school believe and what they seek to create (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Shared vision. Outcomes and trajectories that are valued in a school environment and motivate staff and students by signaling what is important to the group as a whole (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

Teacher leadership. The knowledge, abilities, and dispositions necessary for teachers to envision (and reenvision) goals and purposes, make decisions, as well as analyze and assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of those decisions (Fullan, 2007; Neumann, Jones, & Webb, 2012).

Teacher working conditions. Any condition that impacts teacher dissatisfaction or conditions that contribute to teacher mobility and employment decisions. These working conditions include, but are not limited to administrative support, autonomy in making decisions, school safety, class size, time, etc. and are categorized into five domains on the NCTWCS: time, empowerment, leadership, facilities, and resources (New Teacher Center, 2012).

Transformational leadership. Leadership that enhances an organization by raising the values of members, motivating them to go beyond self-interest to embrace organizational goals, and redefining their needs to align with organizational preferences (Ross & Gray, 2006).

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This explanatory correlational study will be conducted using only data from public, charter, and special schools in North Carolina who responded to the 2012 NCTWCS. The sample

used in this study will not include other regions of the country, vocational or technical schools, or other schools in the United States recognized by state and federal standards (e.g. magnet, military, parochial, or private). This study's demographics are limited to only teacher respondents and may not represent the viewpoints, perceptions, or opinions of all teachers in the state of North Carolina. This study also may not represent the overall impact of teacher leadership and shared vision in North Carolina due to teacher mobility and employment decisions based therein.

The New Teacher Center developed, analyzed, collected, and reported all data for the 2012 NCTWCS. In terms of limitations, each school was responsible for making the access code for their specific survey available to all eligible school staff and personnel. Response to the survey was not mandated or required, therefore each school's data may not represent the perceptions and opinions of the whole. It is assumed that all teacher respondents gave honest responses, and the survey did not provide a means for participants to write in short responses to further clarify or quantify responses given. Temporal validity is another limitation in that the data was collected over a pre-determined amount of time as set by the New Teacher Center, and the survey closed for the entire state of North Carolina at a pre-determined date and time. This information was initially communicated with each school prior to access codes being delineated. Ecological validity presents yet another limitation due to the independent nature of NC schools to implement and account for teacher leadership constructs and develop shared vision within each learning community.

Significance of the Study

This research study is relevant in that it seeks to inform the scholarship and practices in educational discourse. This study is significant because the data and findings will add to the

limited quantitative data existing on teacher perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision in NC schools. The researcher hopes to offer suggestions and recommendations for teacher leaders, school leaders, teacher leaders, central office administration, and district leaders to better understand and navigate the framework of teacher leadership and shared vision as it exists in North Carolina schools for the development of sustainable learning communities. According to Lambert (2002),

Today's effective principal constructs a shared vision with members of the school community, convenes the conversations, insists on a student learning focus, evokes and supports leadership in others, models and participates in collaborative practices, helps pose the questions, and facilitates dialogue that addresses the confounding issues of practice (p. 39).

Transformational leadership develops connectivity between the teacher, student, & learning environment expectations (Kark et al., 2003). The researcher hopes that addressing the perceptions of teachers in the context of the teacher leadership construct and the development of a shared vision within the school will broaden the dialogue and discourse for school leaders who serve in North Carolina schools to focus on these areas to develop effective learning communities. In addition, these findings may have significance for NC school districts regarding potential changes that would affect professional development for teacher leadership and the school leaders to implement shared vision in NC schools. The quantitative analysis of two major constructs in this study – teacher leadership and shared vision – seeks to add content and instructional validity to educational practice for educational leaders who strive to focus on the development and discourse around teacher leadership and shared vision within their respective schools and districts.

Summary

As learning communities and the leadership required to sustain rises to the forefront of educational discourse, the concept of teacher leadership and the implementation of shared vision continue to be explored by experts, scholars, and practitioners in the field. Chapter I presented the background for this study, specified the problem and purpose for the study, outlined the conceptual framework that further navigates the concepts and theories therein, and presented the limitations and delimitations associated with this study. Chapter I also offered a definition of terms and concluded by describing the significance of this problem.

A review of the related literature will be presented in Chapter II. In Chapter II, the researcher will analyze four strands that are specific to this explanatory correlational study which include: teacher leadership, shared vision in education, teacher working conditions, and transformational leadership in education. The purpose of this literature review is to identify and explain key theoretical concepts that undergird the major strands of this study; to provide insight on the history of qualitative and quantitative studies that highlight key finds within these constructs; and finally, to examine the literature for significance and gaps regarding the concept of teacher leadership and shared vision in the development of sustainable learning communities based on teacher perceptions of working conditions.

Chapter III will present a description of the methodology and research design, including the assumptions and rationale for quantitative research, strategy of inquiry, sampling strategy, and the role of the researcher. Data collection procedures will be explored in detail along with data analysis procedures, and the chapter will conclude with a discussion on the validity and generalizability of the study, human participant protection, and Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures and applications. The results of the statistical analysis procedures will be presented in Chapter IV.

Chapter IV presents the analysis and results. Included in this chapter is a detailed discussion of the descriptive statistics and regression analysis. A hierarchical regression analysis was used for analysis purposes. An interpretation of the findings that associate to the research questions will also be discussed. Finally, Chapter V includes a summary of the research, discussion of the limitations and strengths of the study, and implications for further research. This study is intended to offer teacher leaders, schools, central office administration, and district leaders a conceptual framework to navigate the implementation and development of quality understanding around teacher leadership and shared vision in NC schools and provide suggestions and recommendations for professional development models around these constructs.

Chapter II

Literature Review

The purpose of this explanatory correlational study is to determine any relationship between background demographic variables (e.g. total years of employment, total years employed at current school, school position, and organization type) and teacher perceptions of the teacher leadership construct with shared vision as a control variable through a secondary data analysis of the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS). In reviewing the extant research on the topic of teacher leadership and shared vision, Sheppard and Brown (2009) offer insight to the state of these constructs by purporting:

Most teachers have become very skeptical of spending their valued time on the development of vision statements that they view as ‘bland motherhood’ and ‘apple pie’ statements. Shared vision, as we conceive it, must transcend the surface noise of pettiness, contradiction, and self-interest, and be a better vision than can be imagined individually (p. 44).

The shift in focus to quality, meaningful vision for all educational stakeholders calls for purposeful, selfless vision to support the development of learning communities (Dufour & Eaker, 1998).

In this review of the literature, the researcher utilizes empirical, data-based research articles, books, research and technical reports, as well as online resources in order to amalgamate further implications and meaning for the purpose of this study. The researcher will analyze four strands that are specific to this explanatory correlational study which include: teacher leadership, shared vision in education, teacher working conditions, and transformational leadership in education. The purpose of this literature review is to identify and explain key theoretical concepts that undergird the major strands of this study; to provide insight on the history of

qualitative and quantitative studies that highlight key finds within these constructs; and finally, to examine the literature for significance and gaps regarding the concept of teacher leadership and shared vision in the development of sustainable learning communities based on teacher perceptions of working conditions.

Teacher Leadership

While there were numerous reform efforts in the 1980s and 1990s to define and implement notions of teacher leadership, the body of literature has been skeletal in terms of concrete definition and its connectivity to the shattering of the top-down leadership that has long existed in public schools today. Muijs, Chapman, and Armstrong (2013) allude to this in their mixed methods study of sixteen participating British Teach First (TF) schools, surveys of participants and headteachers, as well as an analysis of documentary evidence. In the researchers' first survey to second year participants a total of 123 teachers and 36 headteachers responded, yielding a response rate of 50% and 72% respectively. The second participants' survey was sent out one year later and yielded 280 teachers for a response rate of 81% and headteachers response rate of 67% and 45 headteachers. Survey data was then analyzed utilizing such statistical methodologies including descriptive and inferential statistics in order to determine critical relationships. Sixteen case studies were also completed and each case was defined "as school in which the TF teachers worked" (Muijs, Chapman, & Armstrong, 2013, p. 772). The three main elements which influenced the sampling framework were location, intake diversity, and school type. Participation in this particular study was completely voluntary, and participants had the option to drop out at any time.

Muijs et al. (2013) found that TF teachers were "clearly seen to be taking on leadership roles in their school, and the impact of TF teachers on leadership was widely recognized by

senior staff in the school visits, as well as by externals working with the schools” (p. 773). The researchers pointed to significant relationships between leadership ability and the individual’s organizational skills. According to the researchers “teacher leadership is seen as more likely to lead to the development of shared goals in the school, which in turn are seen as an influential factor in generating effective schools (Muijs et al., 2013, p. 774). A key factor, according to the researchers was the extent of support of distributed leadership in these particular schools which ultimately enhanced the overall experience at the school for TF teachers. “Their [teacher leaders] greater involvement in the leadership of the school will also enable them to feel a greater ownership of school strategies and processes” (Muijs et al., 2013, p.769).

Sheppard, Hurley, and Dibbon (2010) allude to the concept of distributed in their study which further purposes to understand distributed leadership in schools along with the role of school principal in the facilitation of distributed leadership. The researchers describe the term distributive leadership as:

An approach in which there are two categories of leaders – formal leaders and informal leaders...Teachers are viewed as partners, rather than as followers, and leadership is defined through the interaction of leaders, constituents, and situation...Within this approach...both formal leaders and constituents have an important, yet distinct, leadership role to play (Sheppard, Hurley, and Dibbon, 2010, p. 2).

Using Amos 17 and maximum likelihood estimation, the researchers employed path analysis in order to determine best-fitting nesting models to analyze the relationships among the following factors: formal school leaders, teacher collaborative leadership, teachers’ professional learning, shared decision-making, shared vision, teacher morale, and teacher enthusiasm (Sheppard et al., 2010, p. 4). At the outset, researchers then developed a theoretical model (Figure 2) around the

aforementioned concepts related to theory and research on distributed leadership in schools and utilized the model to hypothesize pathways through each of these preceding factors.

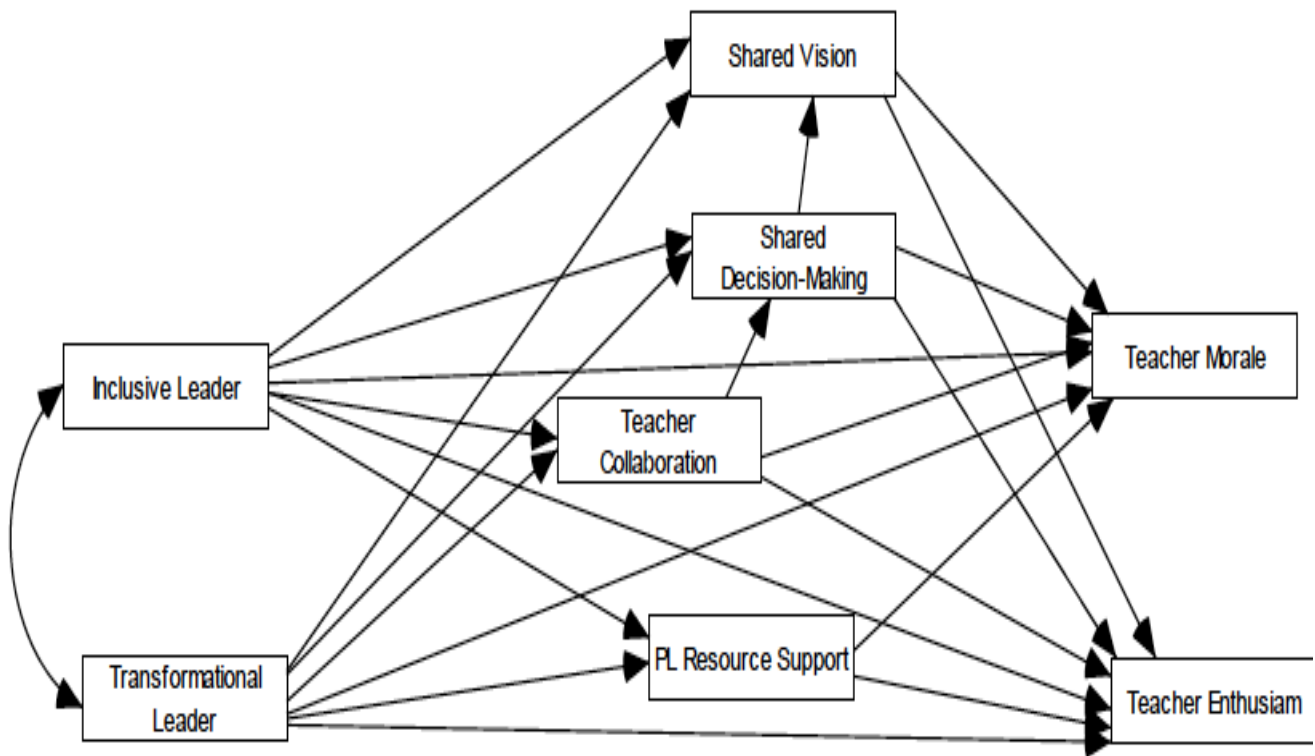


Figure 2.
Theoretical model (Sheppard, Hurley, and Dibbon, 2010).

The sample for this particular study consisted of a total of 136 schools and 2029 teachers, data was collected through survey instruments, and analyzed using Maximum Likelihood factor analysis. The internal consistency reliability coefficients for latent variables ranged from 0.76 to 0.91 respectively, and there were no serious problems with collinearity detected. The researchers found that through the use of path analysis, the direct effects of the formal leadership variables between teacher morale and teacher enthusiasm had significant effects upon both of the outcome variables. Additionally, Sheppard et al. (2010) purport that their findings “help disentangle the

effects of the school administrators being perceived as transformational and inclusive upon the distribution of leadership to teachers” (p. 8). This study holds specific implications for the research study in that it points acutely to the factors that promote teacher leadership as a phenomenon for positive change in a learning environment, and more specifically discusses the implications for shared vision not solely from the building administrator but also among all school stakeholders for the development of thriving learning communities.

Helterbran (2010) states that “teacher leadership can only flourish in a school culture that embraces ‘an optimistic and rigorous educational mission, and it must do so in an environment of respect and a culture of hard work and success” (p. 368). The author goes on to state that vision, desire, and support are all necessary in shaping and inspiring teacher leaders. Neumann, Jones, and Webb (2012) purport that if teachers are to be prepared, interested, and educated participants of transformation and change, then [they] have a responsibility to inform [other] teachers about how the use of leadership practices play out in political spheres of education reform and in relation to the kinds of curriculum and pedagogical knowledge they use everyday. While the construct of teacher leadership is one that boasts numerous definitions within the scope of educational discourse and scholarship, Neumann et al. (2012) offer the Triadic model (Figure 3) of leadership in their summarization of current theoretical conceptualizations of teacher knowledge and teacher leadership.

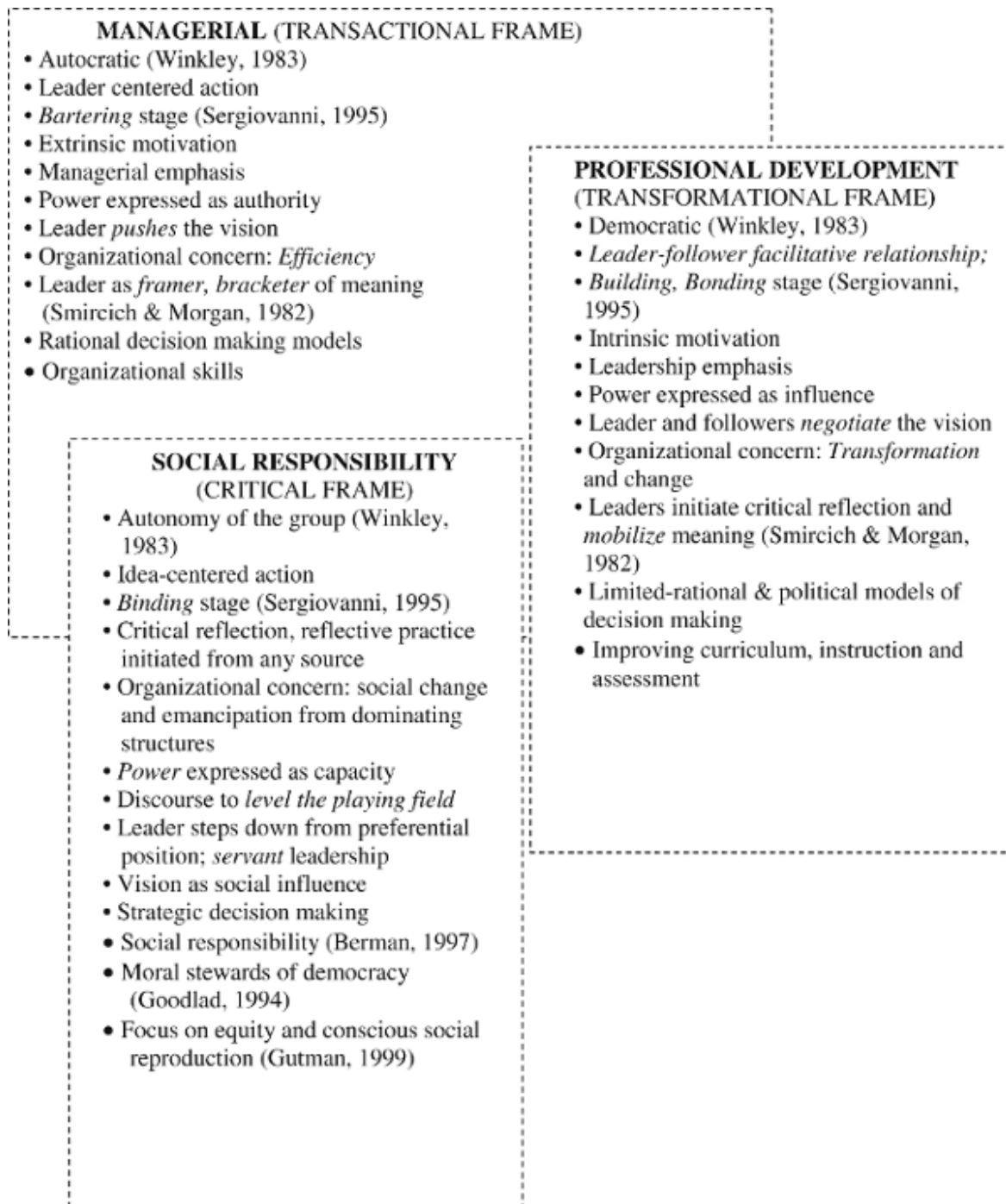


Figure 3.
The Triadic Model of Leadership (Neumann, Jones, & Webb, 2012).

The Triadic model of leadership (Figure 3) by Neumann, Jones, and Webb (2012) illustrates three types of teacher leadership acts born from teachers' implicit knowledge of educational leadership: instructional (transactional domain), professional development (transformational

domain), and social responsibility (critical domain). According to the researchers “it is vital to disrupt the discourse that promotes the idea that principals or those outside the teaching profession as the definers of instructional knowledge” (Neumann, Jones, & Webb, 2012, p.3). Teacher leadership is a multi-faceted construct that spans the professional knowledge landscape to map the cognitive geographics and territorial provinces of teacher knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

This Triadic model of leadership holds deep implications for this particular research study in that it offers a transformational domain that speaks directly to the transformational leadership construct proposed in this study. While Day and Harris (2003) offer the four dimensions of teacher leadership as 1) strengthening classroom practice; 2) encouraging teacher ownership in the change process; 3) assuming the mantle of teacher expert; and 4) engaging in collegiality for mutual learning, major ideals in the Triadic model of leadership undergird the transformational leadership phenomena including “leader-follow facilitative relationship;” “intrinsic motivation;” and “leader and followers negotiate the vision,” are all present in the professional development realm of teacher leadership as offered by Neumann, Jones, & Webb (2012, Figure 3). This study also speaks to the research questions proposed by the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS) that measures the teacher perceptions of the teacher leadership construct.

Angelle and DeHart (2011) purport that “like the concept of leadership, the concept of teacher leadership is defined by the context in which it is experienced. Teacher leadership cannot be defined by a singular role or a narrow list of activities. Teacher leadership, as found in previous studies is defined in terms of how it is lived in the context of the individual school” (p. 142). Researchers conducted a quantitative study to examine the relationships between teacher perceptions of the extent of teacher leadership in a school and the grade level, degree level, and

leadership status. Forty-three schools in seven states participated in this study along with three university professors who served as gatekeepers to school districts in these states. Of the 1,148 surveys distributed to teachers, 750 were returned, and ultimately 59% were used after discarding incomplete surveys. The Teacher Leadership Inventory (TLI) developed by Angelle and DeHart (2011) consisted of open-ended questions aimed at obtaining an accurate picture of teacher leadership within the social context of the school. A constant comparative analysis was conducted, and the researchers extracted five themes of teacher leadership from the analysis including: educational role model, decision maker, visionary, designee, and supra-practitioner.

The researchers of this study specifically outlined the purpose and procedures of the study which helped to connect the purpose and research questions/hypotheses with the overall design (Creswell, 2014). The researchers did strive to establish content validity for this study, however the researcher did not explore all options for following up on the quantitative data, as more credible and reliable resources, including more significant pre-developed surveys and pre-collected data might have been utilized, explored, or analyzed (Creswell, 2013).

The researchers found that there were no significant differences for the factors of sharing leadership and principal selection. Also teachers who were not formal leaders in their schools reported significantly higher scores for Principal Selection than teachers who did hold such positions. This study posits particular implications for this specific research study in that it closely examines the perceptions of teachers by teachers in the field. Angelle and DeHart (2011) also assert in their findings that “the current tradition of top-down leadership in schools challenges the development of leadership roles for teachers. Faced with growing accountability, principals revert to top-down approaches that threaten the trust and collaboration between administrators and teachers” (p. 155).

Wells (2012) extends the research paradigm on the perceptions of teacher leadership in a

mixed methods study of superintendents who participated in a survey while attending a national meeting in 2009. The purpose of this particular study was to examine superintendent perceptions of their role in promoting and supporting teacher leadership efforts in their districts to assess what roles teachers played in elementary and secondary schools in their districts. Twenty-five superintendents completed a survey that focused on four district areas including demographic information; superintendent behaviors in cultivating teacher leadership; extent of teacher leadership participation in teacher leader roles for elementary and secondary teachers in that particular district; and finally, an open-ended final prompt for general comments.

This study utilized a convenience sample of N=25 which creates limitations to the generalizability of this study. As a result, the responses are only reflective of this specific group of superintendents and the districts they represent and are not generalizable to a larger population of superintendents. Creswell (2012) alludes to this issue in quantitative research by purporting that it is unethical for a researcher to exclude studies because of their small sample sizes and insignificant results.

Wells (2012) found that a large percentage of teachers in the district were performing traditional roles associated with teacher leadership, however the qualitative data supported that “it is the school superintendent who is in a position to be able to promote the vision for change, while building capacity with the faculty...[and] superintendents can redirect and redesign a future that develops teacher leadership in their districts by recognizing, acting, and believing; it is superintendents who can give a powerful voice to the vision that includes teachers as leaders” (p. 8-9). These findings are relevant to this particular study in that central office administration plays a critical role in creating learning environments in which school leaders and teacher leaders implement the school’s vision. Wells’ (2012) study adds to the growing body of educational discourse on the specific roles key school and school district stakeholders play in defining

teacher leadership and shared vision from the district level.

Shared Vision in Education

Deal and Peterson (1999) contend that shared visions define outcomes that are valued and shape how energy and time are allocated. Shared vision within a learning environment ensures that all stakeholders in a child's education are focused on a central goal or mission as well as the means of achieving that goal. Senge (1990) further implicates that "you cannot have a learning organization without a shared vision" and that an effective vision presents a credible, yet realistic picture of the organization that inspires the participants to reach for a future goal (p. 209).

While the concept of shared vision is one that "often misunderstood and confused with a limited focus," the implementation and direction of shared vision is prevalent in educational discourse in regards to ensuring that all key stakeholders in the learning community buy in to the collective mission (Huffman & Hipp, 2000, p. 13). Barth (1990) suggest that

One way to begin designing this shared vision: Honoring the visions of others, maintaining fidelity to one's own vision, and at the same time working toward a collective vision and coherent institutional purpose constitute an extraordinary definition of school leadership and represent one of the most important undertakings facing those who would improve schools from within. (p. 156)

The role of shared vision in professional learning communities calls for focus on the individual strengths of the learning communities individual constituents and a respect and adherence to the overall vision. Sheppard and Brown (2009) claim that there is no such thing as a professional learning organization, but rather these learning organization refer to a process where members are taking a stand for a vision, for creating a type of community they would truly like to work within and which can thrive in a world of increasing interdependency and change. When the

concept of shared vision includes images of the future and “transcend the surface noise of pettiness, contradiction and self-interest,” learning community stakeholders – particularly teacher leaders – join in the common vision for a collaborative work culture and learning organization (Sheppard and Brown, 2009, p. 44).

There are several studies in educational research and discourse with significant implications on the study of shared vision in education. Ross and Gray (2006) conducted a quantitative study to examine how principals contribute to student achievement through teacher commitment and beliefs about their shared capabilities. Two school districts in Ontario served as the study site, and all elementary teachers in those districts were invited to participate in the study equaling 205 schools and a total of 3042 teachers. If the school retained at least five teacher responses, the representative data was utilized. All teacher responses were measured using the Likert system with a six-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Researchers included “transformational leadership [which] consisted of 12 items measuring teacher perceptions that their principal leads by developing the capacity of the organization and its members to adapt to the demands of a changing environment” (Ross & Gray, 2006, p.804). The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), was used to measure current student achievement. Due to unstable scores for individual years and subjects, the researchers averaged across grades and subjects to compile a composite score. The researchers used the multi-level survey data to complete a path analysis. By utilizing SPSS and the variance-covariance matrix, the researchers cross-validated the schools and district and created two groups labeled as an exploration sample and validation sample.

Ross and Gray (2006) did a thorough job of outlining the steps taken to gain access to the people and resources within the study site. The researchers also met the challenge of scale development which “needs to follow good procedures for instrument design, and the steps for

this including such ideas as item discrimination, construct validity, and reliability estimates” (Creswell, 2014, p.226). The researchers failed to convey the definition of or the purpose for choosing this particular design, and were unsuccessful in making connections that draw from both samples from the same population (Creswell, 2013). Researchers concluded that the effect of collective teacher efficacy on achievement is significantly mediated by teacher commitment to professional values. Ross and Gray (2006) also found no statistically significant direct effect of leadership on achievement. Interestingly, the researchers did report that principals who assumed transformational leadership were more likely to have a positive effect on teacher beliefs and their collective capacity to effect positive change.

This study holds possible implications for the research questions in that it points to transformational leadership as having a positive effect on collective capacity. School leaders play a pivotal role in structuring and developing the shared vision of a learning environment. If teachers buy in to the roles, vision, and mission of the school, their commitment to the process of implementing quality curriculum and instruction and differentiation practice will yield positive increases in the area of developing thriving learning communities.

Erdem and Ucar (2013) also conducted a quantitative study to determine the degree to which learning organizations predict organizational commitment based solely on teachers’ perceptions. Five education zones with 2,387 teachers served as the sample site and target population. The researchers randomly chose three elementary state schools from each of the five education zones for a total of 429 teachers and 15 total schools. The Learning Organization Perception Scale and the Organization Commitment Scale were utilized with permission from their original authors. The Learning Organization Perception Scales consisted of 42 items and five sub-dimensions that measured shared vision and personal mastery, while the Organizational Commitment Scale was composed of 24 items and three sub-dimensions related to identification

and internalization (Erdem & Ucar, 2013). Both sets of scales were distributed to the teachers in person by the researchers and collected accordingly. 450 teachers returned their completed scales and 11 were not assessed due to incomplete responses and adherence to the directions. Mean and standard deviation values were analyzed from the completed scales for each item. Researchers then completed a hierarchical multiple regression analysis on each sub-dimension as a predictor of organizational commitment.

The researchers of this study specifically outlined the purpose and procedures of the study which helped to inform the reader and connect the research question with the overall design (Creswell, 2014). The researchers did strive to establish content validity for this study, however all options for following up on the quantitative data, as more credible and reliable resources, including more significant scales and pre-collected data might have been utilized (Creswell, 2013).

Erdem and Ucar (2013) found that elementary school teachers strongly agreed on team learning as a sub-dimension of learning organization, but strongly disagreed on personal mastery. The research also revealed that there is a significant relationship between sub-dimensions of shared vision and team learning in learning organization. Most significant to the research of this particular study, is that researchers revealed that there is a significant relationship between identification dimension and learning organization's sub-dimensions, shared vision, team learning and personal mastery (Erdem & Ucar, 2013).

This particular study shed light on the relationship between shared vision and teachers' perceptions. While the findings of this research confirmed individual and team learning can have far-reaching effects on the learning culture and curriculum, it was greatly affected based on the type of leadership exhibited by the school leader. Personal mastery is an emerging phenomenon in public schools especially 21st century schools. For a school leader to navigate and understand

the implications behind personal mastery including teacher leadership and instructional mastery, he or she will have to understand how knowledge is transmitted and comprehended within the Knowledge Era. Implications for the Knowledge Era, curriculum design and differentiation of instruction are diverse for each school and school system as it relates to teachers, students and the communities surrounding the school itself.

Ledgerwood & Liviatan (2010) conducted a multiphase mixed methods study whose purpose was to suggest that group identity should be considered as the end goal for individual group members striving to discover socially recognized identity symbols. In the first study phase, 35 New York University (NYU) undergraduates completed a battery of unrelated surveys in order to fulfill the requirements of a course in which they were currently enrolled. The researchers included surveys that measured gender identity, fairness, and reverse-coded items that were averaged to form an inventory of group identity goals. Ledgerwood and Liviatan (2010) “measured desire for social recognition in two different ways to capture multiple aspects of goal-striving behavior” (p. 408). Study two investigated the prediction for group appraisal and acceptance of symbols by focusing on individual differences within the group completion goal. Participants were asked a second time about their commitment to NYU, however of the 29 NYU students who agreed to participate, half were noted as having a long history of NYU dedication. The final study, which consisted of 60 participants enrolled at NYU were randomly assigned to a social recognition cells within a group identity discrepancy quotient. Participants in this study completed two unrelated surveys, and the group identity symbol presented was relative to the NYU campus.

While the breadth of this article in discerning the purpose of the quantitative and qualitative constructs was lucid, the depth to which the research questions, intent and decision of research design was sparse. Creswell (2014) denotes that “this form of research is popular in the

evaluation or program implementation field in which multiple phases of the project stretch over time” (p. 228). The researchers failed to inform the reader explicitly on how each phase built on each other in the data analysis which is key for a multiphase mixed methods study.

The researchers reported that “group identity can be fruitfully conceptualized within a goals framework as representing the set of attributes and characteristics” (Ledgerwood & Leviatan, 2010, p. 414). It was also proclaimed in this particular research study that shared reality is more typically assumed among groups that are focused on motivation to achieve a common goal. The results of this unique study shed light into the developing framework for leaders to develop not only a group identity, but also a shared identity among individuals with a common objective. Each public school faculty has a vision and mission that is unique to the needs of the students they serve, however establishing commonalities in the manner in which students are educated is the massive task set before school principals who strive for success for all students. Particular attention to the end goal is critical for leaders and followers to work together in order to meet the plethora of needs for students in historically underserved populations and raise their student achievement.

Sheppard and Brown (2009) conducted a five-year deviant case study to analyze one rural school district’s newly appointed CEO’s journey in building leadership capacity and shared vision to catalyze professional learning. Field notes from district meetings and professional development sessions were taken and analyzed along with a journal kept by the district leader. The researchers’ qualitative data analysis was grounded in characteristics of organizational learning including an “emergent leadership approach, building a collaborative culture, and developing a shared vision that focused on teaching and learning” (Sheppard & Brown, 2009, p. 47). A survey instrument, developed to assess school leadership and professional learning, was also distributed and analyzed at the beginning of the five-year study to 11 schools and 215

teachers and again at the end of the five years to 32 schools and 606 teachers. In order to complete a comparative analysis of change over time, the researchers focused solely on the data rendered from the original 11 schools. All data from the data collection procedures was organized into a substantial data file, and prevalent themes were organized and linked together to develop “the greatest significance...in answering [the] research question” (Sheppard & Brown, 2009, p. 47).

The researchers implemented an action research approach and were explicit in stating that they assumed the role of critical friends. Creswell (2014) alludes to the need for researchers to be explicit in their experiences as “these experiences may potentially shape the interpretations the researchers make during the study” (p. 188). The author further supports the researcher’s role in qualitative observation of this nature by stating that observers may engage in roles that shift from nonparticipant to complete participant (Creswell, 2013). The researchers did not indicate what type of qualitative computer data analysis program they utilized in the research study which would have strengthened their overall data analysis and interpretation.

Researchers found that the emergent leadership approach was not consistent with the school board norms of practice or decision-making process. Also, depending on perceptions of stakeholders throughout the district, collaborative leadership had to occur “within the reality of the hierarchy” (Sheppard & Brown, 2009, p. 49). School principals who engaged teachers and their staff in shared decision-making helped bolster the consensus-building process at the school level, and a focus on student learning led to the collaborative district-wide identification of the factors that impacted teaching and student learning. Over the five-year study, Sheppard & Brown (2009) study found that there was a significant increase in teacher perception of shared vision from Year One to Year Four and a 13% increase in teachers’ perceptions that there was a clear plan for moving toward the district vision (p. 56)

This particular study is relevant to the research in that it lends insight to specific constructs that are necessary for a school leader to develop shared vision within a school setting. While the challenge of communication and information sharing is prevalent in 21st century schools, school leaders who solicit and analyze teacher perception on curriculum and instruction as well as professional learning through the professional development of teacher leaders are more likely to develop a unified sense of mission and vision (Sheppard & Brown, 2009).

Teacher Working Conditions

The research on teacher working conditions is extensively qualitative (e.g. case studies, interviews, etc.) and overwhelmingly focused on teacher mobility, student achievement, satisfaction with the workplace, and growing needs in the area of technology. There is minimal extant research with a quantitative approach that analyzes and explores teacher working conditions in order to draw meaning on the state of learning communities or schools. Ladd (2009) conducted a quantitative research study on the perceptions of working conditions in the state of North Carolina based on the NC Teacher Working Conditions survey based on the 2006 survey results. While Ladd (2009) primarily focused on the predictive nature of this survey as it relates to policy-relevant outcomes, the researcher states that, “previous quantitative research on the relationship between teacher working conditions and teacher mobility based on large administrative data sets – much of which has been done by economists – has drawn attention to easily measured school characteristics such as the racial and economic mix of the school’s students or their achievement levels (p. 2).

Ladd’s (2009) study on teachers’ perceptions of their working conditions and their ability to predict policy-relevant outcomes is not only a quantitative analysis of teacher perceptions of their working conditions, but one of the few done in the state of North Carolina. The researcher utilizes factor analysis, full linear probability models, and multinomial choice models to examine

the extent to which survey generated perceptions are predictive of teachers' intended departures from schools, independent of other factors. Ladd (2009) notes that a secondary purpose is to raise some general questions about the usefulness of survey data for predicting both planned departures and other outcomes of policy interest. Specific to this particular study, the researcher utilizes the data set that includes responses to surveys about working conditions that have been administered to all teachers and school leaders in the state of North Carolina every two years since 2002. Ladd (2009) notes that "at the most general level, working conditions for teachers are influenced by the physical features of the work place, the organizational structure, and the sociological, political, psychological and educational features of the work environment" (p.6).

The study yielded that working conditions emerged as highly predictive of teachers' stated intentions to remain in or leave their schools, with leadership emerging as the most significant dimension. "In addition, their work environment includes a number of harder-to-measure factors such as the quality of the school's leadership and the extent to which teachers are given the leeway to make decisions, are supported in their efforts to improve student learning, or have opportunities to develop professionally" (Ladd, 2009, p.1).

This study offers critical implications for this particular study in regards to its quantitative analysis of survey data based on teachers' perceptions as well as the region of the country in which the study was conducted. Ladd (2009) offers that "in a broad effort to improve working conditions in schools [and] potentially make the teaching profession as a whole more attractive and also make teachers more productive in the classroom" the study of working conditions offers significant insight for school and district leaders (p.5). As the development of teacher leaders escalates as a focus in educational discourse, understanding teacher perceptions of their working conditions is critical for leaders in the learning community.

Hirsch, Emerick, Church, and Fuller (2006) developed a report based on the 2006 NCTWCS results through the Center for Teaching Quality. The researchers primary focus was to report findings based on student achievement as well as the conditions that led to teacher turnover in the state of North Carolina. Hirsch et al. (2006) assert that “teacher working conditions matter, and districts need to consider and respond to data from those whose perceptions matter most: their own classroom teachers who are intimately aware of the successes and areas of concerns in their own schools and communities” (p. 2). In 2006, 66 percent of certified educators responded to the NCTWCS representing more than 75,000 teachers, administrators, school counselors, and other licensed professionals. The survey which consists of five teaching and learning domains – time, professional development, leadership, empowerment, and facilities and resources – was accessed online, and individuals voluntarily responded to questions and statements in each domain.

Hirsch et al. (2006) found in their analysis that not only did teacher and administrators view working conditions differently, but also that “the roughly 1,400 principals responding to the survey were significantly more like to note that positive working conditions are in place, and that leadership was making efforts to address them” whereas there were wide disparities in the perceptions of teachers who also responded to the survey (p. 20). The researchers also found that schools vary in the presence of teacher working conditions. Notably, Hirsch et al. (2006) purport that while there was little discrepancy in perceptions based on individual teacher background, there did exist consistent differences between schools. These findings are relevant to the research in that it draws attention to the diverse spectrum of teaching and learning conditions across the state of North Carolina. From schools serving high poverty populations and economically disadvantaged students to inconsistencies in funding and professional development, it is a finding that “calls for school-based, data-driven working conditions conversations and

professional development for both principals and teacher leaders” which is prescriptive and sustainable for each school and district (Hirsh et al., 2006, p. 21).

Transformational Leadership in Education

Transformational leadership was chosen for this study because it is compatible with “broadly based trends of teacher empowerment, multiple stakeholder participation in school decisions, and reduced support for top-down change theories” (Ross & Gray, 2006, 799-800). In addition, substantial evidence exists that transformational leadership is a stronger predictor of teacher beliefs and practices than transactional leadership (Koh, Steers, & Terborg, 1995). Although often measured as a global trait and leadership phenomena, transformational leadership is a multidimensional construct that involves three clusters: charisma, intellectual stimulation of members, and individual consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Ross and Gray (2006) further offer that transformational leadership enhances an organization by raising the values of members, motivating them to go beyond self-interest to embrace organizational goals, and redefining their needs to align with organizational preferences.

The study conducted by Ross and Gray (2006) holds implications for the mediating effects of teacher beliefs and speaks to the role of transformational leadership in this particular study. In this sequential exploratory mixed methods study, researchers examined how principals contribute to student achievement through teacher commitment and beliefs about their shared capabilities. Two school districts in Ontario served as the study site, and all elementary teachers in those districts were invited to participate in the study equaling 205 schools and a total of 3042 teachers. If the school retained at least five teacher responses, the representative data was utilized. All teacher responses were measured using the Likert system with a six-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Researchers included “transformational

leadership [which] consisted of 12 items measuring teacher perceptions that their principal leads by developing the capacity of the organization and its members to adapt to the demands of a changing environment” (Ross & Gray, 2006, p.804). The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), was used to measure current student achievement. Due to unstable scores for individual years and subjects, the researchers averaged across grades and subjects to compile a composite score. The researchers used the multi-level survey data to complete a path analysis. By utilizing SPSS and the variance-covariance matrix, the researchers cross-validated the schools and district and created two groups labeled as an exploration sample and validation sample.

The researchers did a thorough job of outlining the steps taken to gain access to the people and resources within the study site. The researchers also met the challenge of scale development which “needs to follow good procedures for instrument design, and the steps for this including such ideas as item discrimination, construct validity, and reliability estimates” (Creswell, 2014, p.226). The researchers failed to convey the definition of or the purpose for choosing this particular design, and were unsuccessful in making connections that draw from both samples from the same population (Creswell, 2013). The study yielded that the effect of collective teacher efficacy on achievement is significantly mediated by teacher commitment to professional values, and the researchers found no statistically significant direct effect of leadership on overall student achievement. Principals who assumed transformational leadership were more likely to have a positive effect on teacher beliefs and their collective capacity to effect positive change.

This research holds significant implications for this particular study in that it points to transformational leadership as having a positive effect on teacher beliefs collective capacity. Ross and Gray (2006) assert that school leaders play a pivotal role in structuring and developing

the shared vision of a learning environment. If teachers buy in to the roles, vision, and mission of the school, their commitment to the process of implementing quality curriculum and instruction and differentiation practice will yield positive increases in the area of teacher leadership and student achievement.

Gunn and Hollingsworth (2013) examine and measure the impact of district-led initiatives regarding 21st century teaching methods, strategies and pedagogies in a quantitative study over a period of three years from 2008 to 2011. Researchers selected 345 teachers to participate in the administration of surveys on leadership capacity for 21st century learners, student achievement, and technology implementation. The district that served as the study site began a shared visioning process in 2007, and Gunn and Hollingsworth (2013) worked to track the changes in perceptions and practices over time. The researchers utilized a nonstandardized instrument regarding technology use and its direct impact on student learning behaviors. This 109-item instrument captured differentiation of instruction across the three years in 20 different schools in the district. Descriptive statistics were calculated to capture frequencies, variability, and distributional qualities of the independent variable (Gunn & Hollingsworth, 2013).

After each year of the study, perceptions and implementations of 21st century methods became more positive and frequent according to the results. The greater the number of years teaching, the less confident the teacher was in adopting 21st century technological pedagogies, and the more hours devoted to professional development in information technology, the greater the acceptance and efficacy toward technology.

This article has deep implications on the manner in which digital natives and digital immigrants are melded together in the classroom learning environment for the purpose of creating digitally sound citizens for society. Veteran teachers have a stagnant affinity toward learning novel technological pedagogies to implement differentiated instruction. The problem is

that too many of our students enter into the educational arena armed with technological prowess, and too often teachers are not able to tap into their expertise in order to expound on the curriculum.

Conger and Xin (2000) continue the look at transformational constructs in the education, by examining the usefulness of action-research for students that focus on real-life problems and determine the latest trends in executive education. Both researchers, who were also participants in the International Consortium for Executive Development Research (ICEDR), utilized survey data of trends with the ICEDR database. Using a questionnaire designed in 1997 on executive education and the development efforts of international corporations, the researchers conducted observations and in-depth interviews with officers of executive education and vice presidents of human resources to redesign and modify the survey instrument based on six major components: “the purposes of executive education, methods used in executive education, trainers of executive education, assessment procedures for executive education, company support and reward systems, and future trends and challenges in executive education” (Conger & Xin, 2000, p.74-75). The final survey was distributed to 47 ICEDR member companies and consisted of 73 Likert scale items on a scale of 1 as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree. Twenty-five members responded to the survey and all respondents held a senior management position in charge of corporate executive education and development. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze and interpret the data, and significant trends emerged that allowed researchers to further implicate the results.

The researchers did a thorough job of conveying the process for site and participant selection as well as describing their role as researcher (Creswell, 2013). No hypotheses were delineated nor were the research questions explicitly stated to add clarity to the independent and dependent variables. The researchers failed to convey the type of qualitative computer data

analysis program used to assist in analyzing or coding the data (Creswell, 2014). No prevalent themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews were conveyed, thereby weakening the overall strength of the study.

Conger and Xin (2000) purported that leaders who support collaboration and partnerships within their organizations develop a two-way decision-making process that keeps learners at the center. Also, executive leaders who are adept at using various types of technology within the organization are more likely to see positive trends in reaching goals. The research also revealed that executive leaders who engage members in action-research projects find that entry-level and mid-level members have a deeper understanding of solving authentic real world problems.

Yeung and Yue (2006) examine the relationships of school leadership, curriculum and instruction, and assessment in a democratic society by conducting a qualitative case study. The researchers employed a secondary analysis of case studies completed in two research projects for the Center for Information Technology in Education (CITE) at the University of Hong Kong between 2004 and 2006. Case highlights from two schools were analyzed and coded S1 and S2 to protect confidentiality and anonymity. All data for the respective case studies was collected through interviews, observation and pertinent document analysis (Yeung & Yue, 2006). S1 was a traditional public school whose mission was centered on the belief that all students would develop to their full potential through a positive learning environment and a balanced educational program. S2 was an 18-year old elementary school with a high low-socioeconomic demographic. The principal at the time of the study restructured the team teaching approach on care, collaboration and commitment to all student and had also established a clear school vision (Yeung & Yue, 2006). The school focused its efforts on improving language skills for its students and the staff felt an overwhelming sense of engagement in professional collaboration to develop the language curriculum.

Creswell (2012) purports that the assumptions of the study should be consistent with the qualitative approach. The secondary analysis of the case studies revealed disconnections between the data analysis and the central phenomenon because the research questions were not clearly stated. The steps the researchers took to collect the data were not delineated in detail, thereby leaving much room for interpretation on the fidelity to the data collection process. There was evidence that the researchers used a protocol for recording the data as the themes were coded and analyzed based on pre-determined criteria.

Yeung and Yue (2006) asserted from this study that school innovation requires a highly moral, systemic and integrative style of leadership to create a total school environment. Any and all changes made to school policy and practices must be researched and communicated to faculty and staff in order to be effective. Most significantly revealed was that sustainable school leadership comes from “paying attention to the human side of school change” (Yeung & Yue, 2006, p.129).

This article is relevant to the research due to its efforts to examine and study the implementation of effective innovative leadership. The researchers proposed a model of leadership innovation that embodies an understanding of globalization and how school can navigate that model to fit the needs of their students. By expounding on the leadership phenomenon particularly related to school police and practice, this particular study has deep implications for school leaders by alluding to leadership as a collective, professional, dynamic and highly humanized organizational system.

It is important to note that Koh, Steers, and Terborg (1995) offer that transformational leaders focus on the long term (e.g. vision) and motivate followers to transcend their own self-interests and expend energy on behalf of the group, whereas transactional leaders focus on the short term physical and security needs of subordinates. A study by these respective researchers

purposed to extend the theory of transformational leadership outside the borders of the United States to a more collectivist country – Singapore - in order to extend the theory to a non-profit and educational setting. The hypotheses generated were birthed from arguments concerning the generalization of the theory to leadership situations beyond American borders based on the work of Bass and Avolio. Koh, Steers, and Terborg (1995) purported that “transformational leadership remained the most significant predictor for the negative aspects of organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, and satisfaction with the leader” (p. 330).

Summary

Lord & Maher (1990) assert that one would utilize an emergent leadership approach “to describe leadership this is understood to be contingent upon the perceptions of those that are to be led,” and Sheppard and Brown (2009) further offer that that leadership must be collaborative, inclusive, value-based, goal-oriented, and focused on fostering organizational learning (p. 42). The research supports that the definition of teacher leadership is contextualized by each individual’s experiences in collaboration with that “professional knowledge landscape” characteristic to each individual school and district (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 27). Because leaders and followers in thriving learning communities negotiate a vision of good instruction, and as a result mobilize commitment to that same vision the literature offers insight and understanding for navigating the educational terrain from the perspective of transformational teacher leaders and school leaders alike (Neumann, Jones, & Webb, 2012).

Although there are gaps in the research regarding the concept of teacher leadership as it relates directly to shared vision in the development of sustainable learning communities, understanding how teacher perceptions of their working conditions can affect the develop of such environments. The quality of teacher perceptions and factors that influence those

perceptions includes objective factors such as the quality of the school's leadership that holds significant implications for transformational leadership and its role in the development of learning communities (Ladd, 2009). "Transformational leadership was chosen for this study because it is compatible with broadly based trends of teacher empowerment, multiple stakeholder participation in school decisions, and reduced support for top-down change theories (Koh, Steers, & Terborg, 1995, p. 320). Teacher leaders and school leaders that embrace the need for transformational perspective on shared decision-making and shared empowerment have been discussed from a diverse global perspective with specific discourse of the varying levels of leadership that work to influence these perceptions.

Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this explanatory correlational study is to determine any relationship between background demographic variables (e.g. total years of employment, total years employed at current school, school position, and organization type) and teacher perceptions of the teacher leadership construct with shared vision as a control variable through a secondary data analysis of the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey. The following chapter will discuss the researcher's assumptions and rationale for utilizing a quantitative approach along with describing the strategy of inquiry. This chapter will also provide background information on the role of the researcher and personal and ethical biases to be controlled in this particular study. Data collection and analysis procedures will be identified and described, and finally the researcher will discuss potential threats to validity and generalizability of the study.

Assumptions and Rationale for Quantitative Research

A quantitative approach to research allows the researcher to investigate evidence-based theories by examining the relationship between two or more variables (Creswell, 2012). For this particular quantitative study that seeks to explore the impact of years of experience at the current school on teacher leadership and shared vision, there are postpositivist claims that exist. According to Creswell (2014), "postpositivists hold a deterministic philosophy in which causes (probably) determine effects or outcomes" (p. 7). Postpositivist assumptions purport that data, evidence, and rational considerations shape knowledge; in this study these assumptions will help to determine the type of relationship or association between years of experience, teacher leadership and shared vision. The secondary data analysis of datasets that measure NC teacher working conditions examines major constructs that make up learning communities across the state of North Carolina including teacher leadership and the development of shared vision.

Postpositivism also supports that research can serve to explain the situation of concern or describe the causal relationships of interest (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). This quantitative study focuses on the impact of years of experience for teachers at their current schools and examines their perceptions of the teacher leadership construct as well as how their perceptions of shared vision affect those perceptions. According to Mitchell and Sackney (2001), in order “to develop, nurture, and sustain a community of learners means creating a different culture that includes a shared vision, true collaboration, administrator and teacher leadership, and conditions that support these efforts” (p. 2). Quantitative research employs pre-determined methods utilized with instrument-based questions, performance data and attitude data (Creswell, 2014). Based on these tenets, a quantitative, non-experimental research design was chosen and includes pre-determined methods of secondary data analysis, teachers’ perceptions about teacher leadership and shared vision in their current schools, and statistical analysis and interpretation as characterized by quantitative research methods.

Strategy of Inquiry: Explanatory Correlational

According to Creswell (2012), relating variables rather than manipulating the independent variable is considered correlational research. For this particular study, the researcher related years of experience and organizational type (e.g. public, special, and charter) to both teacher leadership and shared vision, respectively. Within the explanatory correlational design, the researcher is interested in the extent to which two or more variables co-vary. This study seeks to determine the co-variance of four independent variables: (1) total years employed as an educator; (2) total years employed at the present school; (3) school position; and (4) organizational ID, and a teacher leadership composite variable. Co-variance analyses were also conducted to determine the role of shared vision on the teacher leadership composite variable as a control variable. This secondary data analysis conducted using the 2012 NC Teacher Working

Condition Survey (NCTWCS) datasets that were previously collected and analyzed during the 2011-12 school year by the New Teacher Center in order to determine correlations.

Role of Researcher

The researcher is a Black, female educator and school administrator who has played distinctive roles in Title I school settings. As an elementary school student, the researcher attended a Title I school in a small rural district with a growing racial/ethnic demographic. During her elementary school years, the researcher's teachers found it difficult to not only categorize racial/ethnic achievement, but also supplement high achievement with the appropriate leadership opportunities. During the researcher's undergraduate studies as a North Carolina Teaching Fellows student, she was afforded the opportunity to visit some of the poorest counties in North Carolina in order to glean a deeper understanding of the academic needs, lack of instructional resources, and the various types of school and teacher leaders working with and for the diverse populations across our state. The researcher also served as an assistant principal of curriculum and instruction at a Title I high school in a large suburban school district with low racial/ethnic student achievement, minimal professional development opportunities for teacher leaders, and lack of shared vision. These observations and experiences shaped the researcher's pedagogical views on teacher leadership and the need to establish an effective shared vision within the learning community.

Currently, the researcher is a principal at a Title I elementary school in a moderately sized suburban school district which serves approximately six hundred students. This school has a negative trajectory of poor student achievement correlated with the transient nature of the student population as well as the teacher population. The lack of shared vision has been tied to the ever-increasing demands of the school leader to educate a high-needs, low-poverty student body and provide opportunities for professional development for teacher leaders.

The researcher's personal biases include being a product of schools that embraces a top-down leadership model in which principals were the primary instructional facilitator, racial/ethnic student achievement was particularly low, and the establishment of a shared vision that encompassed student, teacher, and administrative populations was nonexistent. Throughout this study, the researcher will control these biases by ensuring the use of objective language and the perspective of outcomes. Employing a quantitative research design will also help to control these biases by conducting a secondary data analysis that allows the researcher to analyze data that has already been collected. According to Creswell (2012), it will be critical to avoid misconstruing the data to reflect these personal biases, and the researcher has an ethical obligation to report accurate effect sizes, null hypotheses, and factual cause and effect relationships.

Creswell (2012) purports that researchers need to anticipate the ethical issues that may arise during their studies. For this particular study, the researcher will consider her professional association standards as a member of the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) & the North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals Association (NCPAPA). In order to control the researcher's biases, the researcher will consult the code of ethics for professional associations with local education agencies (LEA) in North Carolina. Due to the requirements of a secondary data analysis the researcher will contact the primary organizations, the New Teacher Center and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), who own the original datasets in order to disclose the purpose of this study. Credit and ownership must be given to the organizations and entities that own the raw data & datasets (Creswell, 2014). The researcher will also work to respect the privacy and anonymity of the sample by developing composite profiles of the schools and LEAs and recoding data in order to serve the purpose of the particular study.

Permission to Use NCTWCS Data

The researcher sought permission from the New Teacher Center in order to gain access to the raw data set for the 2012 NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey for 2011-2012. An application for use of data was submitted to the New Teacher Center Teaching and Learning Conditions Initiative (see Appendix A). Approval for use of the codebook, data set, and final results data set for the 2012 NCTWCS was granted by the Associate Director of the Teaching and Learning Conditions Initiative of the New Teacher Center (see Appendix B). The researcher completed and submitted the NC Data Request for the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey that served to make assurances to protect the anonymity of individual responses while in possession of the data and in any publication. The researcher attempted to respect and assure the privacy and anonymity of the sample by recoding data based on new and composite variables of the schools, LEAs, and respondents. Recodes of the respective codebooks were also performed in order to protect identity and anonymity.

Institutional Review Board

This explanatory correlational study involved a secondary data analysis using the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey and involves human subjects. North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (N.C. A&T) requires that all students who engage in significant research involving human subjects seek approval from the local Institutional Review Board (IRB). In accordance with the U.S. Department of Human Services (DHHS) Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP), the Code of Federal Regulations Title 45, Part 46, states that a local Institutional Review Board (IRB) be “established to protect [the] institution with which it is affiliated” (N.C. A&T, 2013). In order to comply with IRB standards, the researcher completed

and submitted the IRB application based on a secondary data analysis of previously collected data that involves human subjects. Once the study was received by the IRB at North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University, the researcher received notification from the IRB office that the submission did not constitute human subjects research as defined under federal regulations [45 CFR 46.102 (d or f) and 21 CFR 56.102(c)(e)(1)] and does not require IRB approval (see Appendix C). The researcher then utilized IBM SPSS (Version 22) in order to analyze and report output based on the coded dataset.

Sample

The target population for this study is teacher, principal, assistant principal, and support staff respondents from public, charter, and special schools in North Carolina. The population consists of N=16,383 respondents to the 2012 NCTWCS. Responses to the survey were previously collected, coded, and analyzed by the New Teacher Center. Teacher respondents were extrapolated from the total population of available data to separate responses from administration and support personnel which was recoded to account for all other positions including principal, assistant principal, school counselor, and other. The total population for all other positions respondents N = 1,646, and the total population for all teacher respondents N = 14,737.

Data Collection Procedures

Recodes. Coding variables is a process that allows a researcher to assign numbers to the value or levels of each variable. Coding rules must be applied consistently for all participants in the dataset in order to ensure consistency (Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner, & Barrett, 2013). Initially, the raw dataset coded responses to the survey items based on the original 2012 NCTWCS five-point Likert scale which included “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” “don’t know,” “agree,” and

“strongly agree.” The original coding correlated 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = don’t know, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree. Any data set that is coded with approximately normal or scale variable, such as a Likert scale, should be recoded with higher positivity for agree versus disagree. This recoding helps the data to be cleaner and clearer when the researcher analyzed the data (Morgan et al., 2013). For this reason, the researcher removed the “don’t know” response from the data set which represented a null response and recoded the responses to the independent, dependent, and control master tags based on 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree.

Several variable names from the original, raw data set were also recoded in order to provide greater clarity for data analysis and for the specific purpose of this particular study. The researcher used IBM SPSS (Version 22) in order to perform recodes on the originally coded variables. Composite variables and recoded Likert-scale were then applied under the new master tags for the purpose of this particular study, and a new codebook was developed to aid the researcher in running and analyzing data (see Table 1).

Table 1. Coding and Master Tags for Independent, Dependent, & Control Variables

	Master Tag/Description	Coding
Independent Variables		
Total Years Employed as an Educator	TOTYRSEMP	1 = first year 2 = 2-3 years 3 = 4-6 years 4 = 7-10 years 5 = 11-20 years 6 = 20+ years
Total Years Employed at the Present School	TOTYRSSCH	1 = first year 2 = 2-3 years 3 = 4-6 years 4 = 7-10 years 5 = 11-20 years 6 = 20+ years
Position in Two Categories	POSIT2CATR; "others" is a composite of all positions not coded "teacher"	1 = others (principals, asst. principals, school counselors, others) 2 = teachers
Organizational ID	ORGANID	1 = charter/special 2 = public
Dependent Variables		
Teachers are recognized as educational experts	EDUCEXPRT	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree
Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions	TRUSTSOUND	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree
Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues	DECMAKE	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree
Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles	TCHLEADER	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree
Faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems	FACPROCESS	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree
In this school we take steps to solve problems	SOLVEPROB	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree
Teachers are effective leaders in this school	EFFLEADER	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree
Teacher Leadership Composite	TEACHLEADERSHIP; Composite scale of EDUCEXPRT, TRUSTSOUND, DECMAKE, TCHLEADER, FACPROCESS, SOLVEPROB, & EFFLEADER	Range 1 – 4
Control Variable		

Faculty & staff have a shared vision	SHAREDVIS	1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree
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A codebook is a type of document used for gathering and storing codes in SPSS for the researcher to reference in order to interpret and analyze data. Its purpose is to inform the researcher when working with data and variables in certain datasets as well as track recodes that may be made when working with datasets (Morgan et al., 2013).

Variables in the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS).

Independent variables. Total years employed as an educator, total years employed at the present school, school position (e.g. teacher, principal, assistant principal, school counselor, etc.) and organizational identification (which due to small numbers was recoded into public and charter/special schools) will serve as the independent variables for this study.

Dependent variable. The teacher leadership recoded composite variable serves as the dependent variable for this study and is measured by seven specific aspects of teacher leadership in NC schools including: recognition of teachers as educational experts; trust in teachers to make sound professional decisions about instruction; reliability of teachers to make decisions about educational issues; encouragement of teacher to participate in school leadership roles; effective processes for faculty to make group decisions to solve problems; school-level steps to solving problems; and teachers as effective leaders in the school. These seven variables were then computed into the teacher leadership composite variable.

Control variable. Shared vision will serve as a possible mediating or moderating variable on the impact of teacher leadership in NC schools. The NCTWCS measures shared vision based on the teachers' perception within the school leadership construct of the survey in which teachers respond to "faculty and staff have a shared vision" based on a recoded four-point

Likert scale for the purpose of this specific study.

Validity and Reliability of the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS).

The NCTWCS began the North Carolina Working Conditions Initiative in 2002 to assess whether or not state working conditions standards developed by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission were being met. The survey has been redesigned, reevaluated, analyzed, and administered online since 2006 (Hirsch, Emerick, Church, & Fuller, 2006). The attitude data collected is quantified based on the original five-point Likert scale. The New Teacher Center (2012) examined the content validity and reliability of the 2012 instrument. Content validity refers to the extent to which a measure represents all facets of a given social concept (Creswell, 2012). In terms of the NCTWCS, content validity specifically refers to teaching, leading, and learning conditions. According to the New Teacher Center (2012), “through presentations and technical assistance to thousands of educators in North Carolina and across the nation, feedback on the wording of the questions and other areas to assess has been gathered and utilized to improve the survey instrument” (p. 2). In order to assess construct validity among the eight theoretical constructs on which it is designed, including school leadership, confirmatory and exploratory factor analyses on the data set were conducted to determine if the items separated the areas of focus (New Teacher Center, 2012). Each construct was assessed as originally developed, and the questions that load most strongly for each construct were determined as the best measures for that area. The construct validity results indicate that the survey sections are “well suited in North Carolina to reflect the focus area of each major concept generated through the factor analyses” (New Teacher Center, 2012, p. 3).

According to the New Teacher Center (2012) analyses between the NCTWCS instrument, teacher retention and student achievement data demonstrate that the presence of

positive teacher working conditions, as measured by the NCTWCS, were connected to student learning and teacher retention. The predictive validity of the NCTWCS confirmed significant and often strong connections between success on the state's performance composite and achieving or exceeding expected growth. The perception that faculty is committed to helping all children learn, is critically significant at both the elementary and secondary levels (New Teacher Center, 2012).

Reliability analyses were conducted on the original 2012 NCTWCS for measuring the presence of various components of teaching conditions and were also assessed for subscales within the survey on the eight survey constructs. In order to test the internal consistency of the eight major constructs, Cronbach's alphas were calculated, and all eight constructs are reliable with alphas ranging from 0.863 to 0.950. Cronbach's alphas are measures of internal consistency for an entire set of items within a survey or instrument. For the NCTWCS, the internal consistency estimates how consistently individuals respond to the items measured on a particular scale (New Teacher Center, 2012). The teacher leadership composite variable which will be utilized in this particular study, yielded an alpha of .935, and the school leadership construct yielded an alpha of .938.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data was analyzed using descriptive (e.g. frequencies or percentages, means, standard deviations, etc.) and inferential statistics (e.g. correlation and hierarchical multiple regression). The data was analyzed secondarily with multiple regression analysis and analysis of co-variance (ANCOVA) in order to address each of the research questions for the current study.

Secondary data analysis. The 2012 NCTWCS datasets were analyzed in order to determine the relationship among selected independent variables, for example, total years

employed as an educator, total years employed at the present school, the teacher leadership composite variable, and shared vision in NC schools. According to Vartanian (2011), “secondary data can include any data that are examined to answer a research question other than the question(s) for which the data were initially collected” (p. 3). The analysis was completed using IBM SPSS (Version 22) to examine descriptive statistics, that is, percentages for each of the categorical variables, means, and standard deviations of the continuous variables. Research questions were addressed using Pearson correlation, hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Creswell, 2014).

Descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics are used to further describe the data during analysis. Descriptive statistical information typically includes measures of central tendency, measures of variability, and associations between variables (Morgan et al., 2013). The researcher used the IBM SPSS program in order to report the descriptive statistics of the sample including the mean and standard deviations for all independent variables delineated in the study (Creswell, 2014). Information regarding control and dependent variables also was presented. Frequencies and percentages of the number of times each indicator registered in the dataset within the recoded parameters were also calculated and analyzed in the output.

Inferential statistics. Research questions were addressed using Pearson correlation, and hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Creswell, 2014). For associational inferential statistics (e.g. correlation), the researcher utilizes the data output to determine whether the association or relationship is positive or negative (Morgan et al, 2013).

Pearson correlation. For the purpose of this study, the researcher chose to run a Pearson’s Correlation first to determine if any rules regarding multicollinearity were being violated. Correlation is a statistical technique that can show whether and how strongly pairs of variables are related (Morgan et al., 2013). The most common type of correlation, Pearson

correlation, is useful when the researcher wants to examine the relationship between two or more variables while removing the effect of one or two other variables. The main output of a correlation is called the correlation coefficient or r . It ranges from -1.0 to +1.0 and the closer r is to +1 or -1, the more closely the two variables are related (Morgan et al., 2013) For the purpose of this study, Pearson correlation was run on selected independents (e.g. total years employed as an educator, totally years employed at the present school, and school position) to determine the relationship between the teacher leadership composite variable and shared vision.

Multiple regression analysis. Multiple regression analysis allows the researcher to learn more about the relationship between two or more independent variables and an outcome variable. It provides the relative influence of several independent variables on the dependent variable (Creswell, 2014). Specifically, this study was interested in predicting the influence of several independent variables (e.g. total years as an educator, total years employed at the present school, school position, and organization type) on teacher leadership with shared vision as a control variable. Multiple regression models provided coefficients for estimating the effects the independent variables had on the dependent variables. A regression coefficient in multiple regression is the slope of the linear relationship between the criterion variable and the part of a predictor variable that is independent of all other predictor variable (Morgan et al., 2013). For the purpose of this study, the research sought to determine what was the best predictor of agreement in perception of teacher leadership and agreement in perception of shared vision in the second multiple regression model.

Hierarchical multiple regression is a form of basic multiple regression that allows the researchers to specify a fixed order of entry for variables in order to control for the effects of covariates or to test the effects of certain predictors independent of the influence of others (University of Colorado at Denver, 2014). As the researcher builds successive linear regression

models around the teacher leadership composite variable, each subsequent model adds the predictors of interest (e.g. total years employed as an educator, total years employed at the present school, organizational type, and school position) to the next model. Running these models in IBM SPSS (Version 22) will compare the models and test if successive models fit better than previous ones.

Threats to Validity and Generalizability of the Study

This explanatory correlational study utilizes data from public, charter, and special schools in North Carolina to analyze years of employment for teachers at their current school, teacher leadership, and shared vision within those schools. Because content validity poses a threat to the selection and population of any population within a study, it is important to consider content validity when collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the results of a quantitative study (Creswell, 2012). Within this secondary data analysis, the validity of the instruments, test items, and survey items has already been established, however the researcher employed the use of statistical methods in order to analyze the sample. Other threats to internal validity included selection and testing.

The researcher worked to protect testing validity through the secondary data analysis, which ensured that data collected from the NCTWCS was administered at one time, and that different survey items or forms were not used in an earlier survey. It is also important to ensure the generalizability of the study. The teacher attitude data collected by the NCTWCS represents only teachers' and all other school positions' perceptions within NC public, charter, and special schools and is not generalizable to make inferences about all public, charter, and special schools across the nation.

Summary

The purpose of this explanatory correlational study is to determine any relationship between background demographic variables (e.g. total years of employment, total years employed at current school, school position, and organization type) and teacher perceptions of the teacher leadership with shared vision as a control variable through a secondary data analysis of the NCTWCS. In order for the researcher to correctly address the purpose of this particular study, the process of recoding the data into new variables and composite variables was summarized and explained to provide greater insight into the data analysis. The researcher ran statistical analyses dealing with descriptive and inferential statistics in order to address each research question. The study also addressed issues related to validity and reliability. The following chapter presents the findings and analysis for this study.

Chapter IV

Findings

The evolution of public education and the leadership that sustain it is consistently being redefined. Harris and Spillane (2008) assert that “the growing complexity of education will require leadership that draws on diverse types of expertise and is flexible enough to meet changing challenges and new demands” (p. 32). The educational stakeholders who work in these complex organizational systems remain closest to the working conditions that have been largely, historically qualitative in educational research and discourse. Quantitative analyses of working conditions as it relates to the perceptions of teachers and other school personnel for the development of thriving learning communities are limited.

This chapter describes the statistical analyses conducted in order to answer the purposed research questions for this particular study. The overview of the analysis will include the procedures within the analysis and a description of the descriptive statistics of selected independent, dependent, and control variables. Next, results of the Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis are presented. The chapter concludes with a summary of analysis and data findings as they relate to the study’s research questions.

Sample

The sample included teacher, principal, assistant principal, and support staff respondents from public, charter, and special schools in North Carolina. The population consisted of N=16,383 total respondents to the 2012 NCTWCS. The total population for all non-teacher respondents was N=1,646, and the total population for all teacher respondents was N=14,737 (see Table 2).

Table 2. Frequency Table for Position in Two Categories, Organizational ID, Total Yrs. Employed as an Educator, & Total Yrs. Employed at the Present School

	Respondents	
	N	(%)*
All Respondents	16,383	(100)
Position in Two Categories		
All other positions (<i>i.e.</i> <i>principal, asst. principal,</i> <i>counselor, etc.</i>)	1646	(10)
Teacher	14737	(90)
Organizational ID		
Charter or Special School	210	(1.3)
Public School	16173	(98.7)
Total Years Employed as an Educator		
First Year	762	(1.7)
2 - 3 Years	1257	(7.7)
4 - 6 Years	2405	(14.7)
7 – 10 Years	2806	(17.1)
11 – 20 Years	5297	(32.4)
20+ Years	3844	(23.5)
Total Years Employed at the Present School		
First Year	2167	(13.6)
2 - 3 Years	2808	(17.7)
4 - 6 Years	3871	(24.4)
7 – 10 Years	2930	(18.4)
11 – 20 Years	3026	(19.1)
20+ Years	1081	(6.8)

* Frequencies and percentages based on valid responses for category.

Demographic Data

Teacher respondents (N=14,737) represented 90% of the participating population, leaving all other positions (N=1,646) who self-identified as principals, assistant principals, and other school support staff represented 10% of the participating population. For organizational type, public schools represented an overwhelming majority at 98.7% (N=16,173), with only 1.3% (N=210) represented by charter and special schools. For the variable, total years employed as an educator, the largest portion of teachers served between 11 and 20 years (N=5297) representing 32.4%. Conversely, first year educators (N=762) represented the least total of the participating population at 1.7%, and educators having served 2-3 years (N=1257) represented 7.7% of the total participating population.

For the variable, total years at the present school, educators employed at their present school 4 and 6 years (N=3871) comprised the largest portion (24.4%). Educators who had been employed at their present school for 20 years or more (N=1081) represented only 6.8% of the total participating population.

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive data analyzes mean, standard deviation, and total (N) of independent and dependent variables. For this particular study, the researcher analyzed two independent variables including total years as an educator, total years at the present school, the teacher leadership composite variable, and the control variable faculty and staff have a shared vision (see Table 3).

Table 3. Means & Standard Deviations (SD) of Total Yrs. Employed as an Educator, Total Yrs. Employed at Current School, Shared Vision, & Teacher Leadership Composite

	Means	SD	N
Total Years Employed as an Educator	4.35	1.41	16371
Total Years Employed at the Present School	3.32	1.47	15883
Faculty & Staff have a Shared Vision	3.04	.706	15975
Teacher Leadership (composite)	3.07	.718	15883*
Teachers are recognized as educational experts	3.03	.735	16097
Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions	3.07	.740	16095
Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues	3.04	.733	16025
Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles	3.25	.660	16073
Faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems	2.95	.767	15851
In this school we take steps to solve problems	3.03	.716	15942
Teachers are effective leaders in this school	3.14	.678	16026

*Represents valid N cases

For total years as an educator (N=16,371), the mean (\bar{x}) was 4.35 with a standard deviation (SD) of 1.41 signifying that the average total years as an educator for the participating respondents was between 7 to 10 years. In terms of total years at the present school (N=15,883), the mean (\bar{x}) was 3.32 with a standard deviation (SD) of 1.47 meaning that the average number of years for responding educators at their current school was between 4 and 6 years.

Based on the descriptive analysis based on perceptions of faculty and staff having a shared vision the mean (\bar{x}) for participating respondents was 3.04 with a standard deviation (SD) of .706. This indicates that the average response was that educators generally “agreed” that the faculty and staff have a shared vision at the current school based on the total participating respondents to the 2012 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS).

For the teacher leadership composite variable, the mean (\bar{x}) was 3.07 meaning that overall teachers “agreed.” The data output rendered one outlying mean correlated with “faculty have an effective process for making group decision to solve problems” with a (\bar{x}) = 2.95. This signifies respondents “agreed” on average to this variable.

Pearson Correlation

For the purpose of this study, the researcher chose to run a Pearson’s correlation first examine the relationship between selected independent variables and the two dependent variables, the Teacher Leadership composite variable and Shared Vision (see Table 4).

Table 4. Selected Independents with Shared Vision and Teacher Leadership Composite

	Teacher Leadership	Shared Vision
Total Years Employed as an Educator	.004	.040***
Total Years Employed at the Present School	-.058***	-.024***
Position in Two Categories	-.136***	-.094***

N=16,383

p < .001***

Independent Variables:

Total Years Employed as an Educator – Coding (1-first year, 2-2-3 years, 3-4-6 years, 4-7-10 years, 5-11-20 years, 6-20+ years)

Total Years Employed at the Present School - Coding (1-first year, 2-2-3 years, 3-4-6 years, 4-7-10 years, 5-11-20 years, 6-20+ years)

Position in Two Categories – Coding (1-All other positions, 2-Teachers)

Organizational ID – Coding (1-Charter/Special, 2-Public)

Dependent Variable:

Teacher Leadership (composite) - Coding (4-Strongly Agree, 3-Agree, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree)

Faculty and Staff have a Shared Vision - Coding (4-Strongly Agree, 3-Agree, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree)

The correlation table renders that the more years employed as an educator the more agreement that faculty and staff have a shared vision ($r=.040$, $p < .001$). The more years employed at the present school the less agreement with teacher leadership ($r= -.058$, $p < .001$) and the less agreement that faculty and staff have a shared vision ($r=-.024$, $p < .001$). Lastly, teachers agreed

less (than all other positions) with perceptions of teacher leadership ($r = -.136, p < .001$) and faculty and staff having a shared vision ($r = -.094, p < .001$).

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis

This study was interested in predicting the influence of several independent variables (e.g. total years as an educator, total years employed at the present school, school position, and organization type) on teacher leadership with shared vision as a control variable. Hierarchical multiple regression models provided coefficients for estimating the effects independent variables had on the dependent variable (see Table 5).

Table 5. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Teacher Leadership^a & Independent Variables

	B	β	R²	ΔR^2
Model 1⁺				
Faculty & Staff have a Shared Vision	.622	.709***	.709*	.503
Model 2⁺⁺				
Faculty & Staff have a Shared Vision	.615	.702***	.714**	.510
Total Years Employed as an Educator	-.003	-.006		
Total Years Employed at the Present School	-.016	-.037***		
Organizational ID	-.107	-.020**		
Position in Two Categories	-.143	-.069***		

^aDependent Variable: Teacher leadership scale w/7 variables

+Predictors: (Constant), faculty and staff have a shared vision

++Predictors: (Constant), faculty and staff have a shared vision, organizational id recoded, total number of years at the present school, position in two categories, total number of years employed as an educator
 $p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{**}$, $p < .001^{***}$

Independent Variables:

Total Years Employed as an Educator – Coding (1-first year, 2-2-3 years, 3-4-6 years, 4-7-10 years, 5-11-20 years, 6-20+ years)

Total Years Employed at the Present School - Coding (1-first year, 2-2-3 years, 3-4-6 years, 4-7-10 years, 5-11-20 years, 6-20+ years)

Position in Two Categories – Coding (1-All other positions, 2-Teachers)

Organizational ID – Coding (1-Charter/Special, 2-Public)

Dependent Variable:

Teacher Leadership (composite) - Coding (4-Strongly Agree, 3-Agree, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree)
Faculty and Staff have a Shared Vision - Coding (4-Strongly Agree, 3-Agree, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree)

Hierarchical multiple regression procedures were used to explain predictors of the dependent variable “teacher leadership” composite variable. The first model the control variable, faculty and staff have a shared vision was entered. The independent variables were added to faculty and staff have a shared vision to examine the contribution of each model.

For Model 1, the beta was .709, which means for each unit increase in Shared Vision, there is a .709 increase in Teacher Leadership controlling for all other variables in the model. The R-square was .709 which means that having a shared vision contributes about 71% of the variance in teacher leadership.

For Model 2, again, shared vision was the strongest predictor for teacher leadership with a beta of .702, $p < .001$. For each unit increase in total years employed at the present school, there was a .037 decrease in teacher leadership controlling for all other variables in the model. For the variable, Position in Two Categories, being a teacher as opposed to being an administrator or support staff personnel was associated with a .069 decrease in teacher leadership controlling for all other variables in the model. The overall R-square increased from .709 to .714. The independent variables in Model 2 accounted for over 71% of the variance in teacher leadership. R-square change did not increase substantially because the strongest predictor of teacher leadership was faculty and staff having a shared vision.

Summary

This chapter began with an overview of the data analysis procedures, research questions, and sample. The demographic data and descriptive analysis was discussed, including

frequencies, means and standard deviations. It was determined that when all other variables are included in the model (Model 2), shared vision shows a slight reduced effect. The data implicated that the nature of the relationship between teacher leadership and total years at the present school and teacher leadership was statistically significant and negative. The following chapter will provide further implications and conclusions based on the data. Suggestions for professional development, practice, and further research will also be discussed.

Chapter V

Recommendations & Implications

The purpose of this explanatory correlational study was to determine relationships between background demographic variables and teacher perceptions of the teacher leadership with shared vision as a control variable through a secondary data analysis using the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS). The target population for this study was teacher, principal, assistant principal, and support staff respondents to the 2012 NCTWCS from public, charter, and special schools in North Carolina. The population consists of N=16,383 respondents. Responses to the survey were previously collected, coded, and analyzed by the New Teacher Center. Through a secondary data analysis, the researcher recoded the original datasets according to the parameters of the particular study and analyzed through quantitative analysis.

The research questions for this explanatory correlational study are as follows:

1. How do demographic variables affect the relationship between teacher perceptions of teacher leadership in NC schools?
 - a. What is the relationship between total years of employment and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership in NC schools?
 - b. What is the relationship between years of employment at the present school and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership in NC schools?
 - c. What is the relationship between school position and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership in NC schools?
 - d. What is the relationship between type of school (e.g. public vs. charter/special school) and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership in NC schools?

2. What is the difference, if any, between school position (e.g. teachers and all other positions) and teacher leadership when controlling for shared vision and other variables in the model for NC schools?

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the research findings. Next, this chapter will outline the recommendations for future research and implications this specific study may have for teacher leaders, school leaders, and district administration to develop and sustain thriving learning communities in NC schools. The chapter will then present the strengths and limitations of this particular study. Chapter V closes with concluding assessments about the specific research study and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision in NC schools.

Research Summary

One basic objective of correlational research is to explain the association between or among variables. The explanatory design of such research allows the researcher to make interpretations or draw conclusions from the statistical test results to shed light on relationships, their strength and direction (Creswell, 2012).

Research Question 1. The first research question asked how demographic variables affect the relationship between teacher perceptions of teacher leadership in NC schools. Ladd (2009) alludes to objective realities which may differ from teachers' perceptions of working conditions by stating that "teachers in any one school may not have enough experience with other schools to evaluate aspects of their school in a way that would make their judgments comparable across schools" (p. 10). To examine research question 1, correlation was calculated to assess whether there was a relationship between total years of employment and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership. The resulting analysis confirmed that there was no statistical significance based on the correlation coefficients between total years employed as an educator

and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership. However, the resulting analysis confirmed that there was statistical significance between total years employed at the current school and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership. The data affirmed that the nature of the relationship between total years employed at the current school and teacher leadership was negative and as years of employment increased, there was a decrease in teacher leadership. This supports that notion that the longer an educator stays at the present school, the less likely that individual is to see themselves as a teacher leader in that learning environment.

The resulting analysis confirmed that there was also statistical significance between school position and teacher perceptions of teacher leadership in NC schools. “There is evidence that even in schools where a strong emphasis on and tradition of teacher leadership exists there is differential teacher involvement in leadership,” and actual leadership roles are among the factors differentiating perceived leadership among teachers (Muijs et al., 2013, p. 769). The data affirmed that the nature of the relationship between school position and teacher leadership was negative and that for position in two categories, teachers were more likely than other staff to have a decrease in their perceptions of teacher leadership. The data validates that teachers in NC schools (N=14,737) are less likely to perceive that they are serving in a teacher leader capacity versus other school position (e.g. principals, assistant principals, counselors, etc.) who may perceive that teachers are serving in a teacher leadership capacity.

The data were overwhelmingly representative of public schools (N=16,173) and represented 98.7% of the total participating population. The data also confirmed that public schools were more likely to have a decrease in perceptions of teacher leadership than charter and special schools. It is important to ensure the generalizability of this study. The teacher attitude data analyzed by the researcher represents only teacher and all other school position perceptions within NC public, charter, and special schools, and therefore it is not generalizable to make

inferences about all public school across the nation despite the overwhelming representation in this particular dataset within the state.

Research Question 2. The second research question asked the researcher to determine the difference between school position (e.g. teachers versus all other positions) and teacher leadership when controlling for shared vision and other variables in the model for NC schools. To examine research question 2, Pearson correlation and a hierarchical multiple regression analysis were conducted to assess and analyze this relationship. The data affirmed that the nature of the relationship between total years employed as an educator and shared vision was statistically significant, and that as years of employment as an educator increased, there was an increase in shared vision. The correlation analysis also confirmed that the nature of the relationship between total years at the present school and shared vision was statistically significant. For every year employed at the present school, there was a decrease in perceptions of a shared vision or an inverse relationship. Teachers versus all other school personnel also rendered a negative relationship between teacher perceptions of shared vision and all other position. The data validate that teachers in NC schools (N=14,737) are less likely to agree that faculty and staff have a shared vision versus other school positions (e.g. principals, assistant principals, counselors, etc.,) who more consistently perceive that the faculty and staff do have a shared vision.

Kofman and Senge (1993) highlight the centrality of shared visions in a professional learning community by asserting that there is no such thing as a learning organization, but instead process whereby constituents take a stand for a vision and a type of organization they would truly like to work within. Having a shared vision positively predicted teacher leadership controlling for all other variables in the model. Shared vision showed a slight reduced effect in this study and was the strongest predictor for teacher leadership. Total years employed at the

present school showed an inverse relationship with teacher leadership controlling for all other variables in the model. For the variable, teachers versus all other school personnel (position in two categories), showed a decrease in teacher leadership controlling for all other variables in the model.

The results of this research study are supported by the conceptual framework presented in Chapter I. Mitchell and Sackney (2001) contend that “to develop, nurture, and sustain a community of learners means creating a different culture that includes a shared vision, true collaboration, administrator and teacher leadership, and conditions that support these efforts. In order for learning communities to be developed and sustained in North Carolina schools, school leaders and teachers must work together to achieve a common, shared vision. By examining the perceptions of teachers versus other school personnel as they relate to teacher leadership, allowed the researcher to take an intimate look at seven distinct realities that made up the teacher leadership composite variable. Among these realities include the teacher as decision maker; the teacher as an educational expert; the teacher as a problem solver for group decisions; and the teacher as effective leaders in the school.

The results suggest that teachers in NC schools are less likely to perceive themselves as serving in a teacher leadership capacity, whereas school leaders (principals, assistant principals, etc.) were more likely to perceive that teachers are serving in these roles. The results further suggested that teachers are less likely to agree with other school personnel that the faculty and staff have a shared vision. In order for NC schools to develop as learning communities, perceptions of teacher leadership must align in the positive trajectory toward a shared vision. The following section offer implications for practice among teacher leaders, school leaders, and district administrators to align efforts and move NC schools toward the development of thriving learning communities.

Implications for Practice

The insights gained by this specific research study will contribute to the lack of quantitative data in extant research regarding the development and sustainability of NC learning communities based on teacher perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision. These results will serve teacher leaders, schools leaders, district leaders, and central office administrators in developing professional development that will help to guide and birth the discussion on shared vision in NC schools and the implications on teacher leadership. The perceptions of teachers and other school personnel who practice these concepts daily could assist in providing a quantitative view of the disparities that currently exist between perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision. Additionally, these findings may serve as a catalyst to alter the manner in which strategic plans, professional development, and school improvement team models are implemented at the district and state levels.

The statistically significant divergence between teacher perceptions and other school personnel indicate a need to examine the top-down leadership models within the school context. The model of formal, one-person leadership in schools does little to ensure that the talents, ideas, and insight of teacher leaders are being utilized effectively for the development of thriving learning communities. The formal model also does not support a model of buy-in and commitment that allows its constituents to adjust their moral compass toward a strong shared vision. Relinquishment of top-down power approaches at the school level, would require school leaders to enter into educational partnerships with teacher leaders. Utilizing teacher leaders' insight as representatives on committees, in professional learning communities, and on leadership teams would develop a culture of shared decision-making. For school leaders to

utilize teacher leadership capacity to undergird important decisions creates opportunities for both entities to discuss and collaborate on critical issues that require buy-in in order to be successful.

Shared decision-making as a strategy to balance the perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision at the school deepens the theoretical underpinnings of the conceptual framework and provides a means of qualitative assessment for schools to monitor their procedures and progress. The researcher suggests that school leaders revisit processes and policies specifically related to school improvement efforts at the school level and district level. The findings of this research study were representative of teachers (N=14,737) from public, special, and charter schools across North Carolina. While these results are not generalizable to all public, special, and charter schools in this state, the inconsistencies in perceptions speak directly to the decision-making bodies at the school level and policies that support them. Developing strong school improvement teams in schools that not only work together to co-create the vision, but also buy into it are critical in developing and sustaining thriving learning communities. Teacher leaders working alongside school leaders creates a plethora of opportunities (e.g. school improvement team meetings, professional learning communities, co-teaching opportunities, parent nights, and community events, etc.) to exchange insight from the classroom to the front office that truly fortifies efforts to integrate the vision. This shift from individuality to solidarity and confidentiality to transparency would assist in strengthening the perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision at the school level.

District level leaders play a pivotal role in equalizing the perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision. Because district level leaders oftentimes serve as the figureheads for multiple schools within a system and are directly involved in the development and implementation of policies affecting teacher leaders, it is important that district leaders (e.g. superintendents, associate superintendents, executive directors, etc.) in North Carolina act as

powerful representatives of shared vision. The researcher suggests that a strategic plan that aligns instructional goals with the district vision be communicated to all stakeholders. This includes school leaders, teacher leaders, students, parents, and community stakeholders as well.

Alignment of district, school, and community further ensures that a message of like-mindedness reaches those entities that are most influential in creating thriving learning communities. District leaders might create video modules based on the strategic plan and make them available for school leaders and teacher leaders to utilize for professional development. Also professional development plans that are created with teacher leaders in mind and that focus on developing a shared vision for all stakeholders should be comprehensive, timely, and have multiple forms of assessment. Districts who seek continuous and frequent feedback on these professional development efforts should observe significant shifts in balancing perceptions at the district, school, and teacher level.

Recommendations for Further Study

Future research studies should consider a mixed-methods approach to better understanding the context of teacher perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision for the development of thriving learning communities. Quantitative analysis of the NCTWCS creates a limited perspective of the context in which teacher leadership is experienced and shared vision is implemented. A mixed-methods research study would allow deeper contextual analysis for exploring the diverse working conditions within the state of North Carolina that may engender diverse responses. A mixed-methods research study with a structured qualitative component would also strengthen the overall validity of these particular measures.

To further the contextual analysis of teacher leadership and shared vision in North Carolina, a parallel quantitative study should be conducted to research the perceptions of

principals, assistant principals, school counselors, and other school personnel regarding their perceptions of the same constructs measured by the NCTWCS. This would provide the researcher with an esoteric portrait of the perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision by school, district, and geographical region in order to add to the extant body of literature particularly for the state of North Carolina. Mutual understanding, or lack thereof, among principals, assistant principals, teachers, school counselors and other school personnel will facilitate the development of a relevant body of knowledge that is lacking in the body of educational research. Future implementation of professional development, strategic plans, as well as district and school vision would be greatly affected regarding data in which teachers and other school positions differed in terms of perceptions.

Public schools in the state of North Carolina are subject to a number of high-stakes testing assessments, formalized benchmarking, and rigid local, state, and national policies and procedures. Due to these instructional, operational, and managerial restraints, the researcher suggests that it would be an intriguing study to compare public schools to a comparable number of charter and special schools in the state of North Carolina. It would be interesting to analyze the results based on the context of side-by-side analysis in which public school as well as special and charter school teachers were able to elaborate on their perceptions of teacher leadership in terms of processes and policies in all three organizational learning environments.

The NCTWCS measures the constructs of teacher leadership and school leadership, however the instruments do not specifically evaluate transformational qualities or either teacher or school leaders. Ross and Gray (2006) purport that “transformational leadership contributes to organizational commitment and commitment to the school mission (Ross & Gray, 2006, p. 800-801). Utilizing an original instrument or further developing the NCTWCS instrument to assess transformational leadership qualities would add more complex contextual layers to further

studies and strengthen the validity of the conceptual framework associated with this research study.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

An overall concern when conducting research is that the data supports the theory and questions of the particular study. The researcher must consider whether the results confirm or disconfirm findings from other studies as well as present reflections on some of the strengths, threats, and necessary steps for future researchers to address these same concerns (Creswell, 2012).

Strengths. This research study is relevant to the field of education in that it seeks to inform the scholarship and practices in educational discourse. Quantitative analyses of working conditions as it relates to the perceptions of teachers and other school personnel for the development of thriving learning communities are limited. There exists a plethora of research-based and empirical articles related to shared vision based on the development of 21st century approaches to technology in schools and quality of life in healthcare. There also exist numerous qualitative approaches to teacher perceptions of working conditions through open-ended surveys, individual and group interviews, and case studies on instructional leadership in learning communities. There is a gap in the educational research and scholarship where quantitative analyses on teacher perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision across specific states are concerned. North Carolina comes with its unique set of needs, concerns, and characteristics as it relates to developing thriving learning communities to meet the needs of the students in this particular state.

This study is significant because the data and findings will add to the limited quantitative data existing on teacher perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision in NC schools. According to Vartanian (2011), studies funded by the government generally involve larger

samples that are more representative of the target population, therefore resulting in greater external validity for statistical analysis. The NCTWCS originally developed, administered, coded, and analyzed by the New Teacher Center in conjunction with the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission provides a vast representation of responses from schools across the state of North Carolina for the purpose of this study. Angelle and DeHart (2011) state that “researchers have generally failed to examine differences in perceptions of teacher leadership by those who practice the concept, particularly as the extent of this practice pertains to the school level” (p. 142). As the only current instrument utilized in North Carolina that captures teacher perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision based on working conditions in NC schools, this study included measures of those demographic variables related to teachers and other support staff, which expanded the educational discourse beyond traditional school leadership.

Much of the quantitative research and analysis available specifically pertaining to the NCTWCS was written and published between 2002 and 2010 prior to the statewide implementation of the Common Core State Standards. North Carolina adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010 as its standard course of study for English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics began implementation statewide in all public schools during the 2012-13 school year. Data analysis of teacher perceptions from the 2012 NCTWCS are the first of a quantitative nature to be reflective of these statewide curricular changes, although they are not generalizable to all public schools in the state as response to the NCTWCS was voluntary. According to Ladd (2009),

Although North Carolina has long had a statewide curriculum and tests that are aligned with the curriculum that do not vary much across schools, the pressures imposed on schools as a result of those systems undoubtedly differ across schools.

Hence, some information on teachers' perceptions of the state's system of curriculum, testing and accountability might [be] a useful addition (p. 8).

Additionally, there exists among educational researchers and extant literature a consensus that teacher leadership “is a body of literature [that] has developed and continues to grow, yet it is poorly understood and only intermittently practiced where it counts – in schools” (Helterbran, 2010, p. 363). This study of teacher perceptions of teacher leadership examines teacher leadership from the perspective of those most closely associated with the construct – the teachers and support staff that work in the schools alongside them. The data analysis and findings gained within this research study hopes to offer suggestions and recommendations for teacher leaders, school leaders, central office and district administration to better understand and navigate the role and development of teacher leadership and shared vision as it exists in North Carolina schools for the development of thriving learning communities.

Limitations. There are multiple limitations that influenced the results of this study. First, there was an overwhelmingly represented population of public schools versus special and charter schools that responded to the 2012 NCTWCS. While public schools do outnumber charter and special schools in the state of North Carolina as a whole, representing 98.7% of the total population of represented organizational types limits the overall generalizability of the results. Reimplementation and replication of the NCTWCS among more teachers in special and charter schools in North Carolina would help to diversify the geographical and socioeconomic terrain and considerably increase the external validity of these research findings.

Two specific constructs, teacher leadership and shared vision that were embedded in the school leadership construct were considered for the purpose of this study. Vartanian (2011) warns that data may potentially lack depth in a secondary data analysis, and consequently the greater the breadth, the harder it is to measure any one construct in depth. Utilizing a survey

instrument that focused solely on these two constructs would have substantially increased the researcher's ability to analyze these constructs with greater breadth and depth as well as increased the content validity of the study overall. Also, because the constructs that guided this particular study were operationally defined previously in the original dataset, a "single survey item or subset of test items can lead to reliability and validity concerns" (Vartanian, 2011, p. 10).

The researcher attempted to respect and assure the privacy and anonymity of the sample by recoding data based on new and composite variables of the schools, LEAs, and respondents. Recodes of the respective codebooks were also performed, and a new codebook was created in order to protect identity and anonymity. Vartanian (2011) asserts that datasets that require a recoding of variables ultimately affects scale, value, units, and conceptualization of the originally intended purpose. The researcher conducted the recoding of variables in the dataset based on standard quantitative parameters and the needs delineated by the research study. Every attempt at maintaining the integrity of the originally purposed data was made in order to protect the authentic scales, values, units, and conceptualization of the original 2012 NCTWCS.

Another limitation to this particular study was that information about the demographics of the student populations served by the respondents was not available. Although each local education agency (LEA) was individually coded in the original dataset, and information regarding the schools' socioeconomic status was available on each school districts' website, the researcher worked to respect the privacy and anonymity of the sample by recoding the variables and developing composite variables in order to serve the purpose of this specific study. Ladd (2009) alludes to the potential associations between working conditions and socioeconomic characteristics by stating that, "for teachers, the work environment is determined in part by the educational challenges associated with the economic and racial mix of students in the school – characteristics of schools that are typically easy for the researcher to measure" (p. 1). Future

research could serve to extend the quantitative research analysis to include socioeconomic dimensions not including in this study.

Finally, the survey did not provide a means for respondents to write in short responses to open-ended survey items in order to further clarify or quantify responses given. Qualitative responses to the survey data that was collected and analyzed may lend further insight to critical background knowledge necessary for analyzing the results at a deeper and more contextualized level. Because the concepts of teacher leadership and shared vision are ones that must be examined in the context in which they exist, the researcher would be better able to interpret the results with an increase in knowledge as it pertains to individuals' responses.

Conclusion

Teacher leadership behaviors serve as intellectual models for schools to challenge status quo and to become learning schools and organizations (Senge, 1990). The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWCS) offered a platform for the researcher to delve into the perceptions of teachers and other school personnel as it relates to perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision in North Carolina Schools. There is limited educational research available on teacher perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision across the state of North Carolina, particularly where working conditions in Common Core learning environments. In order to achieve the goals set before teacher leaders on a daily basis, there must be buy-in and a consistent perspective on the shared vision within the school context. Not only does the increased expertise and confidence of teachers have a direct positive effect on teacher effectiveness, but also it directly affect the process through which teacher leaders and school leaders develop “schools as communities to provide environments in which teachers are encouraged to learn and develop” (Muijs et al., 2013, p. 769).

Findings suggested that the nature of the relationship between teacher leadership and total years at the present school was statistically significant and negative. The data also implicated that the nature of the relationship between teacher leadership and teachers' perceptions of such was more likely to be negative versus all other positions. The data also confirmed that public schools were more likely to have a decrease in perceptions of teacher leadership than charter or special schools. "It is suggested that conceptualizations of teacher leadership entails radical cultural changes in educational systems" (Kiranh, 2013, p. 180). The insights gained by this specific research study will contribute to the lack of quantitative data in extant research regarding the development and sustainability of NC learning communities based on teacher perceptions of teacher leadership and shared vision. Shifting from a hierarchical to a collaborative culture is necessary in bringing about balanced perception of these concepts with North Carolina schools and districts (Angelle and DeHart, 2011). District leaders and school leaders who work toward shared decision-making models that support strong stakeholder teams, consistent communication, and sustained opportunities for feedback from teacher leaders should fortify efforts to develop thriving learning communities in the schools across North Carolina.

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Appendix A

NCTWCS Data Request to the New Teacher Center

How to Request Data for Use in Your Research

We ask that you address the following in your request:

1. What is your affiliation? If applicable: who is your advisor?

My name is Mary Hemphill, and I am a PhD candidate in the Leadership Studies program at North Carolina A&T State University. My dissertation committee chair is Dr. Forest Toms, Associate Professor in the Leadership Studies Department at NC A&T.

2. Be clear on the research question you are addressing and why/how the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions data is necessary and how it will be utilized to answer your question.

The title of my dissertation is "School Leaders' Impact on Racial/Ethnic Student Achievement and Shared Vision in NC Title I Schools". This study seeks to examine the impact of Title I school leaders as instructional facilitators in learning environments that specifically serve Title I demographics. For this reason, there is a need to understand how school leaders impact racial/ethnic student achievement and shared vision within the context of North Carolina Title I Schools. The purpose of this explanatory correlational study is to determine any effect of school leadership on racial/ethnic student achievement and shared vision in elementary NC Title I schools through secondary data analyses of student achievement data and shared vision measures.

The research questions for this explanatory correlational study are as follows:

1. What is the impact of school leadership on racial/ethnic student achievement in NC Title I schools?
2. What is the impact of school leadership on shared vision in NC Title I schools?
3. What is the relationship between school leadership, racial/ethnic student achievement, and shared vision in NC Title I schools?
4. How do demographic variables affect the relationship between school leadership, racial/ethnic student achievement, and shared vision in NC Title I schools?

3. Be specific about the data you need (whole state set, or select districts and survey year if applicable). Also please address if you need demographic information provided by the respondents as part of the database.

I am specifically requesting the NC TWC survey data for Title I elementary schools from the 2011-2012 school year. If the data set is not coded for socioeconomic and/or federal status, then the whole state set for 2011-2012 or the elementary set from the 2011-12 school year will be greatly appreciated. I would also like the demographic information provided by the respondents as well if at possible as this may serve to add the dimension of a mediating variable as I begin to work with the data.

- 4. If demographics are requested you must also address the following question below.**
- a. What assurances will you make to protect the anonymity of individual responses while in possession of the data and in any publication?***

For this particular study, the researcher will consider her professional association standards as a member of the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) & the North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals Association (NCPAPA). In order to control the researcher's biases, the researcher will consult the code of ethics for professional associations with local education agencies (LEA) in North Carolina. Due to the requirements of a secondary data analysis the researcher will contact the primary organizations, the New Teacher Center and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), who own the original dataset in order to disclose the purpose of this study and share any and all final products with the primary organizations before publication. Credit and ownership must be given to the organizations and entities who own the raw data & datasets. The researcher will also work to respect the privacy and anonymity of the sample by developing composite profiles of the schools and LEAs and coding them to protect identity.

- 5. Ensure that you send any final product/publication to the New Teacher Center at least one week prior to publication.**

I am currently on track for graduation in December 2014, and I will share any and all final products/publications with the New Teacher Center more than one week prior to publication.

Thank you for seriously considering my request, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

*You do not need to be overly extensive in your responses to these questions, but we do ask that you ensure the anonymity of the survey responses is protected.

If you have further questions, please contact the Keri Church, Associate Director of the Teaching and Learning Conditions Initiative at: kfeibelman@newteachercenter.org

Appendix B

2012 NCTWCS Data with Demographics Approval

RE: NC TWC data

Keri Feibelman [kfeibelman@newteachercenter.org]

Sent: Tuesday, December 31, 2013 9:25 AM

To: Mary M. Hemphill

Hi Mary,
She was checking her email!

You have been approved for the 2012 NC TWC data with demographics base posted online. Go to www.ncteachingconditions.org/user and login with this information:

*Username: hemphillmm

*Password: CrucH4sT

*Please note that the username and password are case sensitive.

Once you are logged in to the site, a link will appear at the bottom of the left-side navigation. Click on the link to access the 2012 Data with Demographics page. You will find the csv data file, a listing of school (site) and district (org) IDs, and the codebook for the survey.

Please email me to confirm receipt of this information. If you have any technical questions, please let me know.

Thank you,
keri

Keri Feibelman

PLEASE NOTE MY NEW EMAIL ADDRESS: kfeibelman@newteachercenter.org

Appendix C

IRB – Not Human Subjects Research

Subject: IRB - Not Human Subjects Research

Date: Monday, May 12, 2014 at 11:27:11 AM Eastern Daylight Time

From: IRB

To: Mary M. Hemphill

CC: fdtoms@ncat.edu

To: Mary Hemphill

From: Behavioral IRB

Date: 5/12/2014

RE: Determination that Research or Research-Like Activity does not require IRB Approval

Study #: 14-0134

Study Title: Teacher Perceptions on Teacher Leadership and Shared Vision in NC Schools: A Correlational Study Using the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey

This submission was reviewed by the above-referenced IRB. The IRB has determined that this submission does not constitute human subjects research as defined under federal regulations [45 CFR 46.102 (d or f) and 21 CFR 56.102(c) (e)(l)] and does not require IRB approval.

Study Description:

The purpose of this explanatory correlational study is to determine any relationship between background demographic variables and teacher perceptions of the teacher leadership construct with shared vision as a possible mediating variable through a secondary data analysis of the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey.

If your study protocol changes in such a way that this determination will no longer apply, you should contact the above IRB before making the changes.

CC: Forrest Toms, Leadership Studies