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The complex art of wearing multiple hats: A case study analysis of dual-role administrators in rural school districts

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**THE COMPLEX ART OF WEARING MULTIPLE HATS: A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS
OF DUAL-ROLE ADMINISTRATORS IN RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Division of Educational Leadership

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DOCTORAL COMMITTEE

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ABSTRACT

Both superintendents and principals create a foundation for student achievement, school culture, and the vision of a school building or district. When combined, these two, distinct administrative roles become one unique position with less time and resources to fulfill individual job responsibilities. This comparative case study was designed to foster understanding of rural dual-role administrators' roles, responsibilities, and experiences. A dual-role administrator was defined as an individual serving as a superintendent and principal simultaneously. By interviewing and observing two practitioners and reviewing public documents, this study developed an in-depth investigation of the cases. As a result of this study, there is an increased understanding of the day-to-day operations of dual-role administrators. This research added to the literature by understanding dual-role administrators from a situational leadership lens. Results from this study indicated that dual-role administrators had time constraints in completing their job responsibilities, valued relationships with students, staff, and school board members; and utilized a team approach to manage school districts. Results also indicated supportive leadership behaviors aligned with principal responsibilities, while directive leadership behaviors aligned with superintendent responsibilities.

Dissertation Advisor: 

Dr. Erin Lehmann

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A school superintendent wore the hats of chief advisor and educational leader in school districts (Copeland, 2013). Shaping a vision of academic success for all students, creating a hospitable climate, cultivating leadership, improving instruction, and managing people were roles school principals were expected to wear daily (Parson & Hunter, 2019). Additionally, dual-role administrators were leaders who served as both a superintendent and principal. The dual-role administrative position was one of many challenges in rural school districts. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2010) data, rural schools often bore financial strains. The expectation of an individual serving two roles simultaneously was a method of saving money in fiscally strained times (Curry & Wolf, 2017). The dual-role administrator was required to not only lead a district as the superintendent but must also manage the day-to-day activities as a building principal. These day-to-day activities included personnel matters, student discipline, curriculum, instruction, and academic performance (Lynch, 2012).

Researchers identified that nearly 7.5 million public school students were enrolled in rural school districts during the 2016–2017 school year (Showalter et al., 2019). This equated to nearly one of every seven students across the United States. Rural education was often under-researched, and rural students were often accused of underperforming (Pendola & Fuller, 2018). The qualitative investigation herein was specific to individuals serving as dual-role administrators in rural school districts, defined as when one administrator simultaneously was superintendent and principal.

The study herein focused on dual-role administrative positions' strengths, barriers, responsibilities, and supportive measures. This comparative case study allowed for an enhanced

understanding of the unique challenges of leading rural school districts. Determining ways to increase the effectiveness of dual-role administrators has the potential to impact student achievement in these often-forgotten districts.

There were multiple difficulties in serving two roles simultaneously. Dual-role administrators' responsibilities included student achievement, state and federal initiatives, and managing local politics (Tobin, 2006). Administrative counterparts in larger districts were accountable for handling similar tasks but with less quantity because they often only wore one hat as opposed to dual-role administrators, which meant those in larger districts could focus solely on those particular leadership roles. Also noted were the following challenges of working as a dual-role administrator: (a) family time; (b) budget constraints; (c) politics; (d) lack of personal time; and (e) difficult personnel decisions (Yates & De Jong, 2018). Graves (2011) found Midwestern practitioners recognized that the principal duties could engulf the time of a dual-role administrator, which allowed for less focus on superintendent responsibilities.

Nevertheless, it became essential to mention positive aspects beyond the financial savings of a dual-role administrative position. A lesser amount of bureaucratic red tape existed when there was a dual-role administrative position. This made the decision-making process smoother and more accelerated when one person served as both the superintendent and principal (Smart, 2019). Examples of these decisions included approvals of policies, curricula, and technologies. Additionally, there existed an opportunity for more meaningful relationships between administration and students when a dual-role administrative model was utilized due to a higher level of student contact.

In larger districts, students might rarely interact with a superintendent due to the location of their offices or the focus on higher-level issues. However, a dual-role administrator's office

was often located in the heart of the school, surrounded by interactions with students. While research was scant on the advantages of dual-role administrators, to the best of the author's knowledge, the case study herein increased awareness of the benefits and barriers of wearing multiple hats while also examining their leadership approaches.

Statement of the Problem

Both superintendents and principals created a foundation for student achievement, school culture, and the vision of a school building or district. Combined, these two, distinct administrative roles became a unique position with less time and resources to fulfill job responsibilities of each individual role. A dual-role administrator was defined as an individual serving as a superintendent and principal simultaneously. I aimed to understand rural dual-role administrators' roles, responsibilities, and experiences. The researcher chose a comparative case study as the methodology to illustrate the complexities of dual-role administrators in two rural school districts using numerous sources of information—this comparative investigation allowed for deep insights into dual-role administrators' interactions, challenges, and opportunities. Understanding the nature of this unique educational leadership position would add to the existing literature for practicing and future dual-role leaders and school board members.

Rural schools faced many obstacles, including declining enrollments, staffing difficulties, and financial strains (Lamkin, 2006; Samuels, 2012; Yarger, 2018). As Geivett (2010) recognized, the dual-role administrator position was often a “misunderstood and unrecognized position” (p. 14) that was under public scrutiny. School district patrons frequently did not realize the complex workload of a dual-role administrator, which led to unrealistic expectations of the individual performing dual-role administrative duties. Unrealistic expectations by stakeholders

developed into higher stress levels for dual-role administrators which was a reason for turnover in the organizational setting (Williams et al., 2019).

Much was known about the superintendent and principal positions as individual roles; however, there was limited research about the dual-role position (Curry & Wolf, 2017; Lehen, 2020; Rasmussen, De Jong & Aderhold, 2018). This multiple case study herein added rich information regarding challenges, leadership styles, and responsibilities by illuminating specific issues of dual-role administrative positions through the situational leadership theory lens. Notably, to the best knowledge of the author, this is the first study to examine dual-role administrations using the situational leadership framework.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to explore the perceived barriers, opportunities, and responsibilities of dual-role school administrators. The specific style of case study, comparative, allowed for an attempt to produce new knowledge about this complex role. By interviewing and observing two practitioners and reviewing documents, I provided an in-depth investigation of the cases. As a result of this study, there became an increased understanding of the day-to-day operations of dual-role administrators. This research also aimed to fill a gap in the literature regarding understanding this unique educational leader. This research adds to the literature by understanding dual-role administrators from a situational leadership lens. I sought to understand not only barriers but methods of prioritization of responsibilities and duties of dual-role administrators.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the perceived opportunities and barriers of dual-role administration positions?

2. How do dual-role leaders use directive and supportive leadership behaviors?
3. How are administrative responsibilities prioritized by an individual serving in a dual-role position?

Theoretical Framework

Dual-role administrators juggled many job duties to effectively serve their schools and communities (Curry & Wolf, 2017; Lehen, 2020; Rasmussen, De Jong & Aderhold, 2018). In the past, school superintendents served in managerial roles. More recently, in addition to being a manager, superintendents were expected to serve as planners, listeners, communicators, and community activists (Copeland, 2013). The principal role began as the school disciplinarian and the teacher supervisor in the early 1800s (Lynch, 2012). In more recent educational settings, principals were expected to be instructional leaders, providing support for improving student achievement, and monitoring student performance (Pendola & Fuller, 2018). As rural school budgets began to dwindle, the positions of superintendent and principal more commonly became one position. In South Dakota, superintendents were often called to serve in a dual-role capacity (Yates & De Jong, 2018). As dual-role leaders' responsibilities changed, it became crucial to shift educational leadership strategies as well.

Situational leadership theory (SLT), developed by Hersey and Blanchard, recognized that different situations required different types of leadership (Northouse, 2019). Effective leaders had to moderate different behaviors (Blank et al., 1990). The elements of leadership, as defined by Hersey and Blanchard, included directive behaviors and supportive behaviors (Northouse, 2019). The elements of directive behaviors were: (a) giving directions; (b) establishing goals; (c) setting times; and (d) defining roles. Supportive behaviors included: (a) two-way communication; (b) social and emotional support; and (c) helping followers feel comfortable

about themselves and their co-workers (Northouse, 2019). The four distinct categories of leadership styles included (S1) directing style, (S2) coaching approach, (S3) supporting approach, and (S4) delegating approach.

As dual-role administrators managed a plethora of responsibilities as both the superintendent and principal, SLT practices became applicable. Thompson and Vecchio (2009) explained that SLT emphasized the value of understanding followers' readiness and skill sets. The development level of the followers was classified into four categories: (a) D1: low competence and high commitment; (b) D2: some competence and low commitment; (c) D3: moderate-high competence and inconsistent commitment; and (d) D4: high competence and high commitment (Northouse, 2019).

The comparative case study research herein recognized responsibilities, leadership practices, and rural education, as they related to dual-role administrators. However, like rural education, the dual-role administrator position had nuances and characteristics unique to administrative functions. SLT had the potential to assist dual-role leaders in developing their practices. To my knowledge, this is the first study of dual-role administrators that employed SLT. Specifically, directive leadership behaviors and supportive leadership behaviors were identified as components of dual-role administration.

Significance of the Study

Understanding dual-role administrators recognized an important yet understudied topic that could prove crucial in supporting rural school district success. Sharing experiences of dual-role administrators, including responsibilities, leadership behaviors, opportunities, and barriers, would allow aspiring and practicing dual-role administrators to be better prepared to lead their schools while fulfilling both roles simultaneously. Results from this study could potentially assist

school board members in understanding how to support those in dual-role positions and give practicing and future dual-role administrators expectations of the job. Ashton (2013) said, “Without a plan and understanding of potential challenges, new rural administrators, like historical explorers, can find themselves derailed and lost” (p. 1). Overall, this research added to the existing knowledge base by providing information on ways to increase the understanding of dual-role administrators, the challenges they faced, leadership approaches, and the prioritization of their duties.

Definitions of Terms

The following definition is provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of the term throughout the study.

Directive leadership: Directive leadership behaviors helped others achieve a goal through direction-giving, establishing and evaluating goals, setting timelines, and defining roles (Northouse, 2019).

Dual-role administrator: A dual-role administrator was the superintendent of a local public school district who also simultaneously served as principal (Smart, 2019).

Rural area: A rural area was neither a city with a population of 50,000 or more nor a cluster of towns and cities with a minimum of 2,500 people each and a maximum of 50,000 people combined (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Situational leadership theory: The premise that different situations demand different types of leadership, specifically, directive leadership behaviors and supportive leadership behaviors (Northouse, 2019).

Supportive leadership: Supportive leadership behaviors helped others achieve confidence in themselves, others, and the workplace. It included establishing rapport, communicating, and solving problems collaboratively (Northouse, 2019).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provided an introduction, rationale, theoretical framework, research questions, the significance of the study, and definitions. Chapter 2 provides a synthesized review of the literature on rural education, superintendency, principalship, leadership behaviors, and administrator retention. It also includes the impact of school administrators as they influence student achievement. The approach, methodology, participants, and data analysis are outlined in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 examines the experiences, stories, and suggestions of practicing dual-role administrators. A summary of the study and conclusions formulated from the findings, a discussion, and recommendations for practice and further study are addressed in Chapter 5 in a manuscript format.

Summary

Millions of children were educated in rural public schools each year in the United States. In South Dakota, 29% of school districts were led by an individual who served as a dual-role administrator (South Dakota Department of Education). This study determined dual-role administrators' responsibilities, leadership practices, and supportive measures. This research has the potential to inform school boards and practitioners to understand the multiple hats worn in this unique leadership role.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of research impacting dual-role administrators. It includes a discussion of studies regarding administrative responsibilities, effective leadership behaviors, rural education, and student achievement. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the perceived opportunities and barriers of dual-role administration positions?
2. How do dual-role leaders use directive and supportive leadership behaviors?
3. How are administrative responsibilities prioritized by an individual serving in a dual-role position?

An overview of the relevant literature reviewed the association between rural education and dual-role leadership is below.

Review

Background and Purpose

The purpose of this comparative case study was to explore the perceived barriers, opportunities, and leadership approaches of dual-role school administrators in rural South Dakota. The study also sought to explain the prioritization of duties in a dual-role leadership position. For this study, a dual-role administrator was defined as an individual serving as a superintendent and principal simultaneously. Dual-role administrators served as organizational leaders, most often found in rural school districts. However, little was known about the impact of dual-role administrators on educational structures (Curry & Wolf, 2017). This literature review intended to garner knowledge and available evidence from research regarding those serving as, and stakeholders impacted by, dual-role school administrators. The main objective of this

literature review was to identify research, from 1988 through 2021, on rural education and dual-role administrators, including leadership behaviors, responsibilities, tenure, and impact on student achievement.

Methods

Databases used to identify resources during the literature review process were ProQuest, ERIC, EBSCOHost, Education Research Complete, ResearchGate, and Academic Search Premier through the University of South Dakota I.D. Weeks Library. In addition, Google Scholar was utilized during the search process. To increase the efficiency of the search results, the researcher used quotations to identify complete phrases, such as dual-role administrator. Additional words and phrases used in the research search were school district, superintendent-principal, rural, education, and administrator tenure. When the search began, the researcher looked for research similar to the dissertation topic and research question. Initially, the researcher aimed to locate literature published within the last 10 years. However, the search was broadened to include the past three decades of research due to limited research during the original time frame. The challenge was extensive because of school administrators' evolving dynamics and added responsibilities; earlier research might not be relevant to today's dual-role administrators (Alvoid, 2014; Hatton et al., 2017). As the process and metrics developed, the researcher recognized different themes which impacted dual-role administrators. As a result, the scope of the search was widened to learn about broader areas that impacted dual-role administrators and those they served.

Results

The review of existing literature identified various sources related to the proposed research concerning dual-role administrators. I selected sources with elements of research which

described the multifaceted experiences of dual-role administrators. The criteria included rural education, administrative turnover, superintendent and principal responsibilities, and leadership practices. As a result of the literature review, themes were developed, and gaps were noted for further exploration.

Review of Related Literature

Various studies researched specific aspects of dual-role administrators, such as leadership behaviors, perceptions, and responsibilities (Canales et al., 2008; Canales et al., 2010; McGuire, 1994; Rasmussen et al., 2018). Studies were completed in California (Geivett, 2010), Colorado (Copeland, 2013), North Dakota (Clark, 2015), South Dakota (Rasmussen, 2018; Yates, 2018), and Texas (Canales, Tejeda-Delgado, & Slate, 2010). However, research and literature often overlooked the unique leadership position of a dual-role administrator. The majority of published research on school administration was specific to either superintendencies or principalship. The conception of one individual serving in multiple administrative roles began as an answer to limited school funding in rural school districts and an avenue to save money (Curry & Wolf, 2017). The change from the traditional structure of separate positions was not the right fit for all rural communities and educational leaders (Samuels, 2012). Combining the workload of two different job responsibilities into a dual-role position held by one individual could increase stress and superintendent turnover (Yates & De Jong, 2018).

Administrative Responsibilities

The responsibilities of school administrators that served in a singular role (superintendent or principal) were researched for several decades. Superintendent and principal responsibilities might share some similarities; however, each position held different priorities. The most effective and engaged school administrators could provide leadership in times of crisis while

laying out optimistic visions for the future of the districts they served. As Geivett (2010) explained, dual-role administrators had to constantly balance tradition, student preparation for post-high school, and the need for innovation, among many other responsibilities.

Superintendent Responsibilities

Public school superintendent positions were multifaceted and constantly changing (Forner et al., 2012; Tieken & Domenech, 2021; Weiss et al., 2014). The following roles of superintendents were identified by Kowalski et al. (2010): (a) teacher-scholar; (b) statesman; (c) communicator; (d) business manager; and (e) applied social scientist. A superintendent's responsibilities included daily operations of transportation, finance, curriculum, policy implementation, and media relations while empowering leaders and serving as a school board liaison (Weiss et al., 2014). These responsibilities were valid for a superintendent in any size district. In another study focused on rural superintendents, Copeland (2013) identified five significant duties as determined by practicing superintendents and school board members: (a) manager; (b) planner; (c) listener; (d) communicator; and (e) community involvement.

The managerial role involved budgeting, scheduling, and supervising. The planner's responsibilities included developing the professional learning of staff members and curriculum development. The participants in Copeland's (2013) study emphasized the importance of being accessible to constituents and being willing to listen to concerns. As the chief officer of a school district, superintendents needed good communication skills to develop positive relationships. Copeland also discovered rural superintendents, who were successful, had to be involved in community activities. Connecting with the community increased the likelihood of a successful tenure (Copeland, 2013). According to Forner et al. (2012), superintendents needed to make difficult decisions that impacted the lives of others negatively when focusing on improving the

learning environment for children. School district budget and financial planning, personnel issues, working with the local school board, and public relations were responsibilities identified in Garn's research (2003). Once an additional job duty, such as principal, was added to the superintendency, the responsibilities multiplied.

Principal Responsibilities

The leadership of a school principal was the second highest-rated factor, behind classroom instruction, as an influence on students' academic success (Brockmeier et al., 2013). Marzano et al. (2001) identified 21 responsibilities of effective school principals including fostering shared beliefs and being aware of the undercurrents in the school. Instructional leadership was recognized as one of the significant responsibilities that resulted in school improvement (Alvoid & Black, 2014; Parson & Hunter, 2019). Leadership focused on student achievement included coaching teachers, organizing professional development, understanding content standards, and ensuring fidelity to the curriculum.

According to Brockmeier et al. (2013), principals were responsible for creating a positive school culture, handling personnel issues, determining discipline decisions, and creating positive publicity—in addition to instructional leadership duties. Another responsibility specific to principals was ensuring special education services were provided to children with disabilities. Principals had to ensure students with disabilities received the least restrictive, appropriate public education (Lynch, 2012). Looking to the future, Reid (2021) identified areas principals would continue to be responsible for ensuring student success: (a) school safety and security; (b) supporting student and teacher mental health; (c) positive interactions; and (d) effective communication with parents. It was documented that the responsibilities of a school principal

were never easy; however, with increased accountability, it became increasingly challenging (Alvoid & Black, 2014; Lynch, 2012).

Dual-Role Administrator Responsibilities

Research was much scater regarding the responsibilities of a dual-role administrator (Curry & Wolf, 2017). It was understood that the dual-role administrator was ultimately responsible for all duties the superintendent and principal upheld individually. A study completed by Curry and Wolf (2017) found that school board presidents, teacher union presidents, and practicing dual-role administrators agreed, when asked to identify the primary responsibilities of dual-role leaders, the top two responsibilities included chief financial officer and role model. In Curry and Wolf's (2017) study, all three aforementioned groups of respondents agreed that a dual-role administrator should spend more time on the superintendent's duties than on principal's duties. This was due to the essential priorities of spending district finances responsibly and creating positive relationships with stakeholders as the superintendent.

Canales et al. (2008) wrote, "Multiple roles and responsibilities of the dual position may impede the educational leader's ability to lead effectively" (p. 1). Another study showed that teachers preferred dual-role administrators spend more time on management, while dual-role administrators preferred more time on leadership and instructional coaching (Rasmussen et al., 2018). Copeland (2013) found that although the enrollment size of dual-role administrative districts was typically small, the duties and responsibilities required of small school administrators were not lessened because one individual was filling a dual role. Research indicated the system of checks and balances with state and federal government agencies for reporting district activities was the same for singular positions as it was for dual-role administrators (Tulppo, 2022). As the lone administrator in a school district without central

office staff's support, dual-role administrators found it difficult to leave the building to attend professional development and networking opportunities (Smart, 2019). While one individual attempted to juggle two job duties, one's professional growth often suffered due to a lack of time and support in fulfilling requirements.

Leadership Practices

It was important to note that a school administrator with effective leadership practices would positively impact constituents (Marzano et al., 2001). It took unique leadership skills to succeed in an individual school administrative role and even more remarkable skills in a dual-role position. First, research on leadership behaviors, or leadership skills, delves into what is needed to succeed as a single-role administrator before practices of effective dual-role administrators are identified.

Forner et al. (2012) recognized rural leadership practices related to Marzano's research. Seven effective methods were found within Forner's study of superintendents: (a) establishing goals; (b) supporting reform; (c) confronting struggling students and teachers; (d) removing low-performing teachers and principals; (e) working closely with building principals; (f) focusing on student needs during contract negotiations; and (g) aligning financial commitments to district priorities. Kowalski (2013) recognized that an effective superintendent had leadership skills, including communication, collaboration, and consensus-building. These leadership practices were utilized outside school walls with community members and within the school buildings with staff members and students. As an individual role, the superintendent position involved many significant responsibilities, as Tulppo (2022) noted. These responsibilities included human resources, community liaison, and chief executive officer.

As another school administrative position, principals shaped the daily interactions within a school building. Quality school leadership from a principal was second only to classroom instruction in influencing student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). A principal's effectiveness was directly tied to positive classroom results (Blase & Blase, 2004). Winn et al. (2009) found that the leadership skills of rural principals in high-academic schools differed from principals in lower-rated rural districts. In Winn et al.'s (2009) study, rural principals who focused on mastery in the programming domain addressed the school's instructional needs by utilizing collaborative leadership, which resulted in high achievement. Skills included in the programming domain were instructional management, curriculum design, staff development, and measurement/evaluation.

Additionally, Winn et al. (2009) explained rural principals of lower-performing campuses demonstrated skills in the critical arena of personal communication. In Winn et al.'s (2009) study, effective leadership practices were difficult to discern. Ashton and Duncan (2012) recognized the importance of high visibility and effective communication for principals to maintain positive relationships with stakeholders. Further, the expectation of building principals to create a safe learning environment for all students was a full-time responsibility (Blase & Blase, 2004).

While effective leadership practices were essential for any school administrator, it was important to look at the practices of those serving in the dual-role position. Lehnen's (2020) research explained that one person could be successful in a dual-role position if they utilized effective leadership behaviors, such as communication, monitoring goals, outreach, and flexibility. Other studies were not as clear about the effective practices of dual-role administrators. Two such studies found that respondents, whether teachers, board members, or

administrators, disagreed about the effective behaviors of dual-role administrators (Canales et al., 2008; Rasmussen et al., 2018). Tolerance of freedom, representation, and consideration were the most prevalent behaviors practiced by dual-role administrators in Canales et al.'s (2008) research. This same study found representation, tolerance of freedom, and role assumption as leadership behaviors of dual-role administrators identified by teachers. Lastly, Canales et al. (2008) reported school board presidents found the behaviors of representation, consideration, and demand reconciliation to be more prevalent. Despite inconclusive evidence as to what was considered best practices in the evolving role of dual-role administrators, one thing rang authentic—effective leadership was challenging when serving in two roles (Canales et al., 2008; Rasmussen et al., 2018).

Rural Education

The common characteristic of school districts who employed dual-role administrators was they served in rural districts. The United States Census Bureau defined a rural area as neither a city with a population of 50,000 or more nor a cluster of towns and cities with a minimum of 2,500 people each and a maximum of 50,000 people combined (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Doerksen & Wise (2016) found that “57% of school districts in the United States [were] located in rural areas and [served] 24% of the U.S. student population” (p. 62). Researchers identified that nearly 7.5 million public school students were enrolled in rural school districts during the 2016–17 school year (Showalter, 2019).

When comparing rural and non-rural principal positions, there were differences depending on rurality in leadership style, job responsibilities, and challenges of the role (Parson & Hunter, 2019). Parson and Hunter (2019) found a specific challenge in rural settings: shortages in the candidate pool for open positions. Often, a job opening might only have one applicant

(Parson & Hunter, 2019). Myers (2011) explained that rural superintendencies were known for being a “temporary position” with frequent turnover (p. 47). Also, in a rural setting, school administrators were expected to be “[jacks] of all trades” (Lamkin, 2006, p. 20). Similarly, Lamkin (2006) noted that there needed to be an improved understanding of the challenges of small-school administrators to better prepare individuals to be superintendents in rural districts.

Unlike urban or suburban school settings, rural administrators had to meet state and federal mandates alone, without additional administrative staff members and a plethora of resources such as assistant superintendents, building principals, or human resource officers (Ashton & Duncan, 2012). In addition to student achievement, Copeland (2013) and Tekniepe (2015) recognized that rural school districts were the center of economic support and social and recreational activities in rural communities for all generations. While urban communities had other opportunities and locations for fellowship, the school was often the only organization in rural areas (Kamrath, 2015).

Rural Education and Superintendency

The superintendent in a rural district was not only a community leader but was also responsible for students, staff, families, and school boards. Challenges to rural superintendents included high poverty rates, a wide range of responsibilities, and a “uniquely public role” (Forner et al., 2012, p. 2). Lamkin (2006) recognized that less support and fiscal resources in a rural area made superintendency more difficult than in a suburban or urban area. Superintendents employed in rural areas were less likely to have advanced degrees (Garn, 2003). Garn also identified a significant lack of gender and ethnic diversity within rural superintendent positions.

Rural Education and Principalship

Parson, Hunter, & Kallio (2016) found rural principals identified instructional leadership as the most critical responsibility. However, rural principals spent a significant amount of time on student discipline and management as they seldomly had an assistant principal or dean of students to assist with behavioral needs (Pendola & Fuller, 2018). Hatton et al. (2017) noted that rural principals were often responsible for multiple roles because fewer individuals were serving in roles overall. Rural principals recognized they might have a more immediate impact on school culture and student initiatives from being the sole administrator (Beesley & Clark, 2015; Parson & Hunter, 2019). This was due to not having to get changes approved by an administrative team, thus expediting the decision-making process.

Principals who served in a rural school system might also directly influence the quality of education in their buildings because there were no other individuals to delegate or share managerial responsibilities (Ashton & Duncan, 2012). There was also an expectation of community involvement and accessibility as a rural district administrator (Hatton et al., 2017). Ashton and Duncan (2012) identified four themes for rural principals to implement as influential leaders. These themes included being the leader stakeholders look to for direction, giving purpose and formulating goals, developing respectful relationships, and being organized for effective management.

Rural Education and Dual-Role Leadership

The dual-role administrator had to lead a district as the superintendent and manage the day-to-day activities as a building principal. Canales (2008) recognized that dual-role administrators faced the significant challenge of performing multiple job responsibilities. While the school district's size was typically less than 500 students for dual-role administrators, the

workload was similar to larger communities (Rasmussen et al., 2018; Doerksen & Wise, 2016). According to Forner et al. (2012), dual-role leaders were involved in every operational and standards-setting decision in a rural district. Smart's (2019) research aimed to help individuals understand the impact of professional isolation on rural superintendent principals. Yates and De Jong (2018) documented the rewarding aspects of a dual-role school administrator as assisting students in succeeding, helping staff achieve goals, making decisions, and completing diverse tasks. Also noted were the challenges of working in a rural area as a dual-role administrator: (a) family time; (b) budget constraints; (c) politics; (d) lack of personal time; and (e) difficult decisions (Yates & De Jong, 2018). Single-handedly balancing the responsibility of school board governance and student discipline issues was an example of one of the vast arrays of dual-role administrator duties.

Academic Achievement

In an era of increased accountability, superintendents and principals had a more visible impact on student achievement (Brockmeier et al., 2013; Forner et al., 2012; Hatton et al., 2017). Previous educational reforms, such as the No Child Left Behind and Every Student Succeeds Act, required school standardized testing results to be available to the public. "Aspects of the superintendency do play a part in student academic achievement, specifically the length of tenure of the superintendent and the total years of experience as a superintendent" (Myers, 2011, p. 51). While it would be helpful to have a list of traits of an academically focused superintendent, Chingos et al. (2014) recognized that characteristics of superintendents who had an extraordinary impact on student achievement could not be reliably identified. Superintendents could influence student achievement and were more effective when they had in-state experience (Hart et al., 2019).

It was widely known that principals significantly impacted the effectiveness of schools. The research of Soehner & Ryan (2011) and Winn et al. (2009) documented principals who were visible instructional leaders had higher rates of student success. Brockmeier et al. (2013) discovered that principals' tenures and stability significantly impacted student achievement. While instructional leadership was a priority for school administrators, Parsons et al. (2016) found, "One consequence of the multifaceted nature of the rural principalship is that rural principals report spending less time on instructional leadership than other roles" (p. 66). Leithwood & Jantzi (2008) identified principal priorities for school improvement and student achievement. However, like most, the Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) study only focused on administrators fulfilling one job title.

Administrator Retention

Williams et al. (2019) recognized that the superintendent position had the highest turnover rate in education, and superintendents left their posts when school board or community expectations were unrealistic. The workload and expectations were doubled when combined with another job responsibility, such as a principal. Research showed that student learning might suffer when there was turnover at the administrative level in school districts (Hart, 2019; Pendola & Fuller, 2018). Both dual-role administrators and rural administrators were faced with a lesser amount of administrator retention. This could have adverse effects on the school district and community. Specifically, Pendola & Fuller (2018) found that the impact of a principal leaving a school led to lower achievement, lower graduation rates, and toxic organizational culture. Alvoid (2014) agreed that schools were more likely to perform poorly following a year after a principal departed.

Typical superintendent tenure ranged from four to seven years, while a rural superintendent's average tenure was 2.7 years (Williams et al., 2019; Yarger, 2018). Glass et al. (2000) found the average tenure for a school superintendent in all sizes of districts was 6.4 years. Superintendents in rural school districts had higher turnover rate and mobility than superintendents of larger districts (Tekniepe, 2015; Garn, 2003). This was often due to the fiscal stress of rural school districts with fewer resources (Kamrath, 2015; Myers, 2011). Retention of dual-role administrators was often tricky because of the number of responsibilities and unrealistic workload (Curry & Wolf, 2017; Kamrath, 2015). Ashton and Duncan (2012) noted that rural administrators had to work with the community for common goals to ensure retention of the positions. Developing relationships with community stakeholders was time-consuming and often stressful.

There were benefits to practices which encouraged longevity in the superintendent position, as they might have also increased student achievement (Hart et al., 2019). In addition, Williams et al. (2019) recognized that student achievement and community finances were negatively impacted by increased turnover rates. In a study by Kamrath (2015), almost half (45%) of the participants felt that turnover in the superintendent position negatively impacted school districts. Administrative retention was not only specific to the superintendent level, but building principal turnover was also significant to learning at a school (Morford, 2002). Another negative of high levels of turnover was filling administrative positions with an effective leader during a time of principal candidate shortages in rural areas (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009). Moreover, Morford (2002) found that 90% of new principals in rural school districts left their position within three years.

However, some studies (Williams et al., 2019; Chingos et al., 2014) contrasted these views and found that administrative turnover could be positive. When change and innovation were necessary for a district to succeed, a new face in the superintendent role might revive the district. Chingos et al. (2014) claimed that student achievement did not improve with the longevity of superintendent service within their communities. Willems et al. (2019) found that superintendents were likelier to stay in a district if they impacted the children's education. Brockmeier et al. (2013) recognized that retaining school administrators was a crucial practice for meeting academic goals. Understanding the leadership styles of dual-role administrators was an essential piece of this study to determine how dual-rule positions impacted school district success rates.

Gaps in Research

The initial gap in research that this research addressed was the leadership styles utilized by dual-role administrators. By applying SLT to this case study, specific leadership behaviors were identified. Individuals who served as dual-role administrators in rural schools needed professional development that correlated directly with their experiences (Forner et al., 2013). Limited research addressed how dual-role administrators could continue growing and learning while serving in their complex roles. Unlike previous research, this comparative case study attempted to identify ways dual-role administrators could be supported. Moreover, this was done using SLT, which was the first time dual-role administrators were examined from this lens to the best of the author's knowledge.

Summary

A limited amount of research was conducted on dual-role administrative positions in rural school districts (Curry & Wolf, 2017). The dual-role administration was a personal topic for me

as the researcher of the study herein due to the fiscal conservatism educators face throughout rural states. However, recent nationwide events, including the COVID-19 pandemic, proved how vital school administrators were in evolving educational practices to meet the needs of 21st-century teachers, students, and the community at large (Varela & Fedynich, 2020).

This chapter reviewed the literature and research related to dual-role administrators. Specifically, administrative responsibilities, leadership practices, student achievement, and rural education were researched. A dual-role school leader became affected by each of these topics. As noted in this review, while responsibilities for rural district superintendents and principals continually increased, little attention was given to the individuals who served both roles simultaneously. Lastly, this chapter revealed gaps in the research that could help support those serving in dual-administrative roles.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of this comparative case study research was to seek an understanding of dual-role school administrators in a rural, Midwestern state. The day-to-day operations include rural dual-role administrators' roles, responsibilities, and experiences. A dual-role administrator was an individual who served as a superintendent and principal simultaneously. The researcher chose to conduct a comparative analysis to mobilize knowledge from two individual case studies of Midwestern superintendent principals through multiple sources of information. Currently, forty-four dual-role administrators were employed in this Midwestern state at the time of this research. The case studies of two of these administrators were gathered via interviews, observations, and artifact reviews. This work aimed to add to the literature on dual-role administrators. This research also aimed to fill a gap in the literature regarding this unique educational role. The gap in the existing literature addressed by the research herein was understanding the dual-role administrator's opportunities, challenges, leadership behaviors, and prioritization of responsibilities.

Chapter three contains the methods used to conduct this qualitative study, including the participants of the study, research procedures, data collection, and data analysis procedures. This chapter reviews the guiding research questions and a description of the case study research design. I then described my background and role as the researcher for this study, followed by an overview of the participants. Next, the procedures for data collection and data analysis are presented. The chapter concludes with descriptions of the study's trustworthiness, limitations, assumptions of the design, and ethical considerations.

Research Questions

To gather insight into the roles, beliefs, and practices of dual-role administrators, the following research questions guided this qualitative study:

1. What are the perceived opportunities and barriers of dual-role administration positions?
2. How do dual-role leaders use directive and supportive leadership behaviors?
3. How are administrative responsibilities prioritized by an individual serving in a dual-role position?

Research Design

Case study research permitted a deep understanding of a situation or issues with multiple data points (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). This research type was selected to deepen the exploration of those in dual-role positions. Qualitative methods also allowed for the voices of participants to be empowered (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My goal was to understand the challenges of dual-role administrators from their perspectives; this goal was most effectively met with a qualitative method. More specifically, a case study method was employed.

As noted by Yin (2014), the case study design contained five components: (a) questions; (b) propositions; (c) unit of analysis; (d) logic linking data to the propositions; and (e) criteria for interpreting the findings. The first component, questions, asked the “how” and “why” of dual-role administrators. Proposition, the second component, discovered the beliefs, perceptions, and experiences of dual-role administrators. The third component, the unit of analysis, was the case. In this study, the two dual-role administrators served as superintendent and elementary principal simultaneously. The fourth component, the logic linking data to the purpose, was made during and following the data collection phase. Trends and patterns were recognized as the narratives were coded. Themes that surfaced served as answers to the research questions. In addition, the

semi-structured interview approach allowed divergent topics to be freely discussed as participants expressed their views on their terms. The last component, the criteria for interpreting the findings, was accomplished by coding and sorting responses that provided substantive answers to the research questions. More significant or global themes facilitated the argument for further research.

Case Study

According to Yin (2018), case study research “involves a return to experience to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience” (p. 13). I used case study methodology for this study because it allowed me to illuminate in-depth and extensive descriptions of dual-role administration. The case study methodology included multiple data sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2018). The exploratory process involved asking questions, determining themes, and interpreting data to develop a purpose for the situation or issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A multiple case study approach allowed the development of analyzing two cases and developing similarities and differences.

Performing two case studies on dual-role administrators in rural South Dakota school districts allowed for comparative data. A comparative case study occurred because the same research and data collection methods were used in both cases. Once each case was analyzed individually, the next step was comparing both cases. Utilizing this type of research approach, a voice was given to those who served in these unique leadership roles to enhance understanding and support along with their leadership approaches. The following table described the method and stages of the case study research conducted.

Table 1*Case Study Protocol*

Section A. Overview of the Case Study	Purpose	To explore the perceived barriers, opportunities, and responsibilities of dual-role school administrators. The study also sought to understand the type of leadership behaviors that were utilized in a dual-role position
	Research Questions	What are the perceived opportunities and barriers of dual-role administration positions? Do dual-role leaders use directive or supportive leadership more often? How are administrative responsibilities prioritized by an individual serving in a dual-role position?
	Framework	Situational Leadership Theory
	Role of the Protocol	An agenda for the line of inquiry
Section B. Data Collection Procedures	Fieldwork Researcher	Abi Van Regenmorter
	Data Collection Plan	Interviews with practicing dual-role administrators, analysis of related documents, and observations of dual-role administrators were triangulated
	Preparation Prior to Fieldwork	IRB approval, create a timeline for interviews and observations and determine access to documents
Section C. Protocol Questions	Interview Questions	See Appendix C for interview questions
	Document Analysis	See Appendix E for the document analysis template
	Observation	See Appendix F for the observation template
Section D. Tentative Outline for the Case Study Report	Audience	Future and practicing dual-role administrators, school board members
	Concepts	Barriers, opportunities, and responsibilities of dual-role administrators, leadership
	Recommendations	Supportive measures, recommendations for future research

Background and Role of the Researcher

A dual-role administrative position was a foreign concept until I served as an elementary principal in the second school district of my administrative career. I was hired in the rural school district by a superintendent who also served as secondary principal. Upon his departure to a larger community where he could serve in a single role, the school board asked if I would take over the superintendent-principal position. Fortunately, the school board was flexible, allowing me to remain the elementary principal while adding the superintendent's duties. In planning for the transition, my goal was to conduct principal responsibilities during the school day and superintendent responsibilities after school hours and on the weekends. I quickly learned it was out of my control when a school bus broke down, when insurance claims could be filed, and when the Department of Education was available for questions.

In a short time, I recognized the new position I was serving had an expectation of multi-tasking by school board members, staff, and community members. Due to the multiplication of job duties, my time dedicated to being a building principal began to lessen. I attended fewer regional principal meetings, my classroom visits were sparse, and I was less involved with student assessment and data. My goal was to help others understand this unique leadership position and determine how individuals serving as dual-role administrators could be supported. My role as the researcher was to accept colleagues' experiences while protecting their confidentiality. I needed to bracket my experience to gather the most reliable information possible.

Notably, I served as a professional colleague to the participants in this study. Although I did not know the participants personally, we attend conferences and trainings together. In a rural

state, school superintendents often become acquainted with one another through professional development and networking opportunities.

Participants

A case study involved participants who experienced the issue being explored (Yin, 2018). Case study research was not intended to generalize research results to a larger population but instead provide an in-depth description of the selected issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Two purposely selected rural school districts were chosen to address this study's research questions. The target population consisted of dual-role administrators with two or more years of experience. This criterion was utilized to gain a more thorough picture of the daily responsibilities, as opposed to someone who has only served in the position for one year or less. The research for this study was conducted in a Midwestern state in the United States, where the population consisted of dual-role administrators in public schools. To reach qualified administrators, two practicing dual-role administrators were contacted via e-mail addresses published annually by the Department of Education. This email introduced the research and included a summary of the participant's involvement (Appendix A). Participants were provided the interview consent form as an attachment to the email (Appendix B).

The National Education Association (2018) found South Dakota had 147 school districts which were responsible for educating 132,520 students. According to Rasmussen et al. (2018), South Dakota had one of the lowest population densities in the nation. The state Department of Education (n.d.) identified 19 dual-role secondary principals and superintendents. Elementary principal roles were combined with superintendent positions in 14 school districts. There were also nine districts where the K–12 principal and superintendent positions were combined for the sole administrator in a district.

Table 2 below provides information regarding the number of districts who employed a dual-role administrator, the number of K–12 students who attended a district with a dual-role administrator, and the breakdown of dual-role administrators and the combined principal level they served in public schools in the Midwestern state.

Table 2

South Dakota School Districts with Dual-Role Administrators

Descriptors	<i>N</i>
School Districts	44
K–12 Students Served	11,296
Supt/Secondary Principal	19
Supt/Elementary Principal	14

Data Collection

Dual-role administrators who agreed to participate were asked to schedule a semi-structured, in-depth interview via Zoom. The recorded interviews were stored on a password-protected computer and destroyed after the completion of the research. A semi-structured protocol ensured experiences regarding the research question were discussed (Appendix C). However, additional information relevant to the study was discovered due to the flexible nature of the interview protocol. The candidates selected for an interview were chosen by the end of December 2022. The in-depth interviews were completed by January 2023. Interview questions were piloted with former dual-role administrators who were not participants in the study. The interview questions were designed to allow for a reflection on the participants’ experiences (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Dual-role administrators were asked for demographic data such as age, years working as a principal, years working as a superintendent, years working as a dual-role administrator, highest degree held, school size, and building level at the end of the interviews.

Interviews gathered information based on the study's research questions. Other instrumentations used in this study were field notes, observations, document reviews, reflexive journals, and recordings. Yin (2018) noted reviewing documents assisted the researcher in validating information from other sources. The reviewed documentation included school district Board of Education agendas, minutes, and job descriptions. This case study also included an observational piece that measured the time dual-role administrators spent on various tasks. I observed the two participants for two-to-three hours each during one of their workdays to analyze the amount of time they spent on the superintendent and principal duties. The validity of this research was strengthened because of the multiple sources of qualitative data that were triangulated with the results of the interviews. A combination of various instruments allowed for rich findings and a better understanding of the lived experiences of those in a dual-role position (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Interview Process

Interviews were held and recorded through video conferencing via Zoom. Interview questions were given to the participants in advance to allow time for reflection. Audio recordings were used for transcription purposes. Visual recordings were used for information gathered from body language. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. Pseudonyms were used in place of participants' names to preserve their anonymity. All recordings and notes were stored on a password-protected computer. At the beginning of the interview, participants were again reminded of the voluntary study's purpose, participation expectations, confidentiality measures, and the right to discontinue the interview at any time. Participants were given the informed consent form (Appendix B) and asked to provide verbal consent (Appendix D) to participate in the research. The interview began with rapport-building questions and conversation. The

interview guided the conversation yet permitted the flexibility to garner meaningful information. Open-ended questions were organized around the research questions of this study. Follow-up questions provided clarity and depth to the original answers. The interview protocol was vetted by the committee, practice interviews, and a self-interview of the researcher. Participants engaged in member checking, reading the transcripts for accuracy and reliability and trustworthiness. Follow-up interviews with individual participants allowed me to clarify information gathered in the initial interview and fill gaps in the interview data.

Documents

Another piece of data I collected was documents related to the dual-role administrative position. Both Merriam (1998) and Yin (2018) recognized that mining data from documents is a worthwhile strategy because the documents were usually produced for reasons other than the specific research taking place, increasing their value. The public documents that I analyzed included school district Board of Education agendas, Board of Education meeting minutes, school improvement plans, resumes, School Administrators of South Dakota salary report, resumes, and an evaluation tool. The analyses of these artifacts were reflected in the document analysis template (Appendix E).

Observations

“Observations work the researcher toward greater understanding of the case” (Stake, 1995, p. 60). I observed each dual-role administrator during a routine workday. I tracked their activity (Appendix F) throughout the observation to determine whether it was a superintendent or principal task based on job descriptions. Collecting data through observation followed Merriam’s (1998) stages of entry, data collection, and exit. The first step included gaining permission to observe the participant in their natural field settings. Next, data collection from the observations

was recorded electronically in a Microsoft Word document throughout the observations. The exit of the observation involved informing participants of the completion of the research. Upon the exit of the observation, I had field notes that included descriptions, participant quotations, and my comments regarding bracketing, questions, and general reflections.

Data Management

Once the interviews were complete, the recordings were transcribed and analyzed for common themes. The transcription application through Zoom was used to transcribe the interviews. The researcher then checked the transcripts for accuracy. A codebook was used through Microsoft Excel to organize the themes from interviews, document analysis, and observations. A case study database was developed to organize and document the collected data. Items included in the database were my notes from interviews, observations, documents, narratives, and document analysis.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of data transcription, the researcher began the data analysis process following Yin's (2018) recommended approach of "playing" with the data while looking for patterns, themes, and commonalities. As I reviewed interview transcriptions, I highlighted key sentences and named themes. During a second review of the transcripts, I recorded emergent ideas in a codebook. Using Microsoft Excel, the codebook was used for each phase of the interview analysis for organization and comparative purposes. Significant phrases and themes were identified by developing codes (Lichtman, 2012; Rudestam & Newton, 2015). The codes related to leadership reflected the supportive behaviors and directive behaviors as identified by SLT. I was able to re-trace thoughts and increase validity by synthesizing questions and common themes as they emerged. The next step included classifying or naming codes and categories

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). I utilized specific quotations that supported each theme which Yin (2018) identified as pattern matching.

Data analysis of documents was “guided by questions, educated hunches, and emerging findings” (Merriam, 1998, p. 120). Once the relevant documents were identified, the topic, creator, and intention were noted in Appendix E. The document analysis was reviewed to understand the meaning and relationship with the dual-role administrative position. Themes were noted in the codebook.

During observations, field notes included a description of the setting, the people, and the activity. Direct quotations, or paraphrasing, from the participants, were also noted. I collected and reviewed documents related to the dual-role administrative position through case analyses. The emergent themes were documented in the codebook.

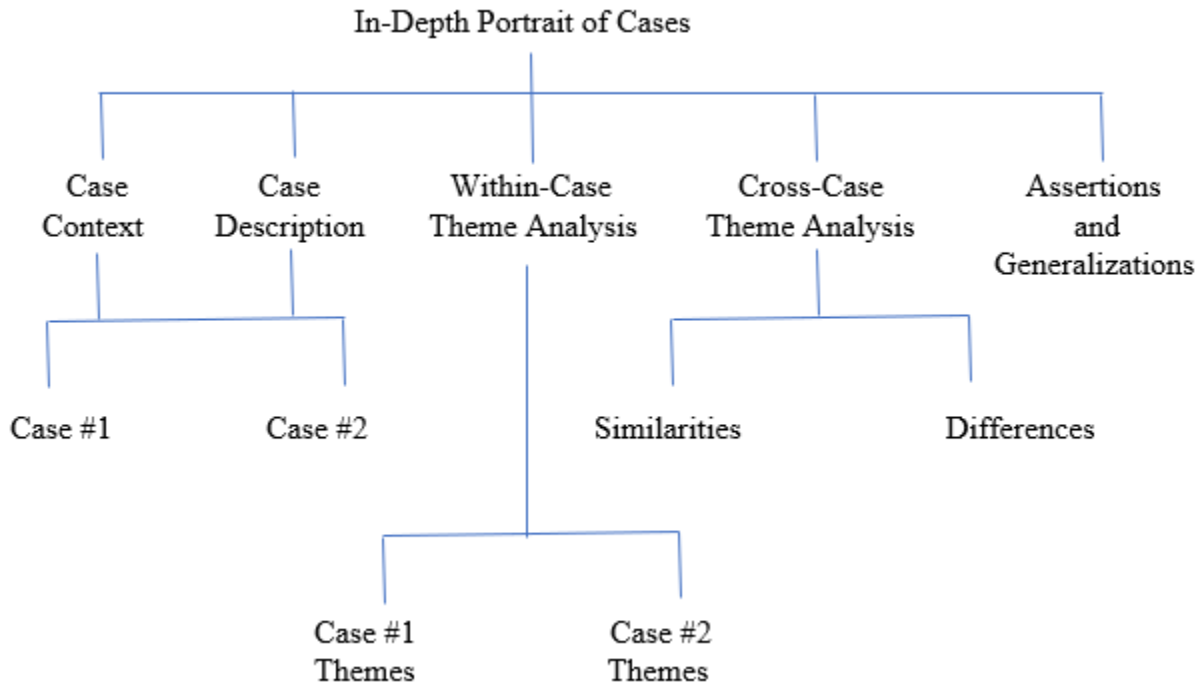
Initially, a second coder was utilized with a subset of the transcriptions to help avoid bias. Having multiple coders provided another perspective through a different set of lenses than the individual researcher. Codes were checked during data analysis of interviews, observation, and document review. Because the second coder served as an elementary school administrator, credibility increased with the comparison between the two researchers. When the researchers disagreed on coding, a discussion was held until a consensus was reached. Also during data analysis, field notes were used as a means of documenting contextual information. Reflexive journaling was used to acknowledge my thinking and biases and to see the issues more objectively.

Once compositions were determined for each participant, they were analyzed extensively for common themes or descriptions among both participants. These themes or descriptions

revealed a feature or trait of dual-role administrative positions. The themes were then compared among participants as seen in Figure 1. Similar themes were combined to form a final theme.

Figure 1

Template for Coding a Multiple Case Study (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 218)



Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended developing and assessing interpretations as the final stage of analysis. Synthesizing the data was completed by diagramming the themes, using peer debriefing, and representing and visualizing the information for a deep understanding of the qualitative data.

Trustworthiness

Trust was a significant factor in developing reliable and accurate descriptions of case studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Shenton, 2004). Like most qualitative research, this study recognized that reality was holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing (Merriam, 1998). To

increase trustworthiness, this study implemented measures to establish credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004).

Credibility

Shenton (2004) defined credibility as the extent to which the study results accurately reflected the participants' lived experiences. Provisions of Shenton's work which were implemented into this study for credibility were the adoption of a well-recognized research method, peer scrutiny of the coding process, triangulation with different data sources, and tactics to ensure honesty by explaining there were no right or wrong answers in the interview setting and an examination of existing research. Another avenue for increasing credibility was allowing participants to withdraw from the study at any time and to review their transcripts.

Transferability

When a reader could apply the results of the research to other contexts confidently, transferability occurred (Shenton, 2004). Transferability occurred when readers understood the phenomenon being researched due to detailed descriptions. As such, defined techniques and procedures allowed for a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) for a level of transferability. The research method, including data collection and analysis, was transparent in this study for the reader to transfer information to other contexts. A chain of evidence (Yin, 2018) was maintained throughout the study; therefore, a reader could trace the research steps to replicate the study.

Dependability

The researcher's goal was to create a dependable study by describing the methodological process for similar research. Shenton (2004) compared dependability with reliability, which was increased when specific details of the study were written clearly. By communicating the step-by-

step procedures of this project, the researcher strengthened the dependability. This case study's dependability increased due to the use of the protocol found in Table 1.

Confirmability

Confirmability techniques used in this research study were the admission of the researcher's beliefs and difficulty bracketing, as well as the triangulation of interviews, observations, journaling, and document analysis. Based on Shenton's (2004) criteria for trustworthiness in a study, the transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability of this research were well-developed.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were evident in this study:

- The dual-role administrative position might impede the educational leader's ability to lead effectively (Canales, Tejada-Delgado & Slate, 2008).
- Participants' years of experience might affect their perceptions.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical behavior when researching was of utmost importance through both professional readings and the emphasis from our doctoral professors (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). I completed the Human Subject Protocol training through the CITI program to ensure my study followed ethical guidelines. Next, I completed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application at the University of South Dakota. Once IRB approval was obtained, I contacted potential participants via email (Appendix A). The informed consent form (Appendix B), included the purpose of the study, expectations of participants, benefits, risks, and measures to ensure confidentiality, which was attached to the recruiting email. Following Creswell and Poth,

participants were confidential and voluntary, and data was stored on a password-protected computer.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the day-to-day operations and longevity of dual-role public school administrators in a rural, Midwestern state as well as to understand their leadership approaches. A comparative case study was the methodology used to guide the study. Following a description of the researcher's background, this chapter detailed the overview of the participants who were chosen. Data collection primarily consisted of information gathered during the interview process, observations, and document review. The researcher identified the data analysis method, methods to increase trustworthiness, limitations, assumptions, and ethical concerns. The findings of this comparative case study are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

The purpose of this comparative case study was to explore the perceived barriers, opportunities, and leadership approaches of dual-role school administrators in a rural Midwestern state. A description of the two school districts in which a dual-role administrative position was utilized was included in this chapter. Each district's demographic data follows the description. First, the themes of each specific section are described, as discovered in the document analysis, participant interviews, and observation process.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the perceived opportunities and barriers of dual-role administration positions?
2. How do dual-role leaders use directive and supportive leadership behaviors?
3. How are administrative responsibilities prioritized by an individual serving in a dual-role position?

The theoretical framework of SLT was also woven into the deductive data analysis of this study. The premise of this theory was leaders needed to change the level of direction and support depending on the needs of the follower (Northouse, 2019). Determining when the participants used directive and supportive leadership styles allowed for a theoretical understanding of the dual-role administrative position. Finally, the chapter culminated with a comparative case analysis. The similarities and differences in themes between the two districts emerged through document analysis, interviews, and observations. This analysis was conducted to understand better the perceptions, actions, and barriers faced by these dual-role leaders, who were in two rural South Dakota school districts.

The Context of the Cases

First, I shared information about the singular case studies before comparing the two districts and themes. The themes of each participating district evolved through document analysis, dual-role administrator interviews via Zoom, and observations. Context is first provided through demographic information.

District 7 Demographic Information

School District 7, a pseudonym, was a small school district in South Dakota. The town in which School District 7 was located had a population of approximately 900, based on the 2020 census. It was the county seat and the most populous city in the county. School District 7 employed one individual who served as superintendent and elementary principal and another individual who served as high school and middle school principal. School District 7 employed four different individuals in the dual-role administrative position in the last six years. Table 2 displays data from the state’s Department of Education website regarding the enrollment and staffing of the district, as well as graduation and attendance rates.

Table 2

School District 7 Demographic Data (From the State Department of Education’s Website)

School District 7	Population	Graduation Rate	Attendance Rate
Total K–12 Enrollment (2021–2022)	348	99.4%	94.9%
Students with Disabilities	14.4%		
Economically Disadvantaged	12.1%		
Staffing			
Certified Instructional Staff (FTE)		28.6	
Student-to-Teacher Ratio		12.2:1	
Administrative Salaries Budget		\$314,091	

For this study, the dual-role administrator of School District 7 was interviewed and observed. Derek Plum, a pseudonym, over 60-years-old, served as an administrator for approximately 25 years in the Midwest. Plum was an administrator in three different states. His administrative experience included serving as a high school principal for approximately 15 years, a dual-role administrator in another state for seven years, and a superintendent for seven years. He was in his second year as the superintendent-elementary principal in District 7. Plum's office was located in the center of the elementary school building, which was on a separate campus from the combined high school, middle school, and business office building. The multiple campuses were approximately five city blocks apart. The Board of Education president was highly involved in the day-to-day activities of District 7, which included frequent visits to the schools and classrooms. The school board president also had daily conversations with Mr. Plum, as well as multiple board meetings per month.

Document Analysis

Various records were available on the school district's website, the state's Department of Education website, the School Administrators of South Dakota website, and provided by the dual-role administrator. The school district website provided school board agendas, minutes, and a recent school improvement plan. The Department of Education website provided the demographics and financial status of the district through a statistical digest document. The School Administrators of South Dakota (SASD) website provided the salary and full-time equivalent of the dual-role administrator. The last document reviewed was Derek Plum's current resume. This was the only document provided by Mr. Plum.

Board of Education Agendas and Minutes

The Board of Education agendas and minutes for District 7 outlined topics discussed during meetings and decisions made by the school board members. Board agendas and minutes reviewed were from the years 2021 and 2022. The dual-role administrator shared information with the board as both the superintendent and the principal. There was ambiguity within District 7's board minutes as related to the administrative reports shared during Board of Education meetings. The comment in the minutes read, "Plum and Anderson provided their administrative reports." No further details were given regarding the administrative report agenda item.

As the superintendent, Mr. Plum shared information on topics including COVID-19 plans, building projects, financial decisions, and ADA requirements. Principal topics addressed by Mr. Plum were school improvement plans, truancy issues, and Section 504 requirements. Additional topics designated in school board agendas or minutes which could have been addressed by either role (superintendent or principal) were in-service planning and Title programs. The frequency of superintendent topics in District 7 was 65%, compared to the frequency of principal topics at 20%. Superintendent topics included financial accounts, federal programming, and COVID funding. The 20% of principal topics were specific to the elementary building (e.g., school improvement plans, truancy, and Section 504 committees). Educational topics categorized as either superintendent or principal were 15% in District 7 (e.g., teacher in-service and Title programs).

School Improvement Plan

In addition to the Board of Education documents, the school district's improvement plan was readily accessible via District 7's website. This plan included a mission statement, vision statement, goals, and professional development needs for the district. District 7 had a goal that

focused on improved communication. An action step to attain this goal was the superintendent would send an all-staff email once per month during the school year to give a board meeting update and cover upcoming pertinent staff-related events for the upcoming month.

This goal emphasized the importance of communication within a school district. An additional action step was to create an advisory council to meet quarterly; the committee was appointed by the superintendent and had representation from certified and classified staff. The advisory council discussed policy, professional development, curriculum, and facility needs. The implementation of an advisory council signified the team approach that was apparent in additional facets of District 7.

SASD Salary Report

The School Administrators of South Dakota published an annual salary report for public school districts in the state. Notably, District 7 reported Derek Plum's full-time equivalent (FTE) as 0.6 superintendent and 0.4 as an elementary principal. Mr. Plum's listed salary reflected each of the dual roles specifically.

Resume

Analysis of the participant's resume allowed for a better understanding of his leadership characteristics, professional goals, and experiences. Derek Plum stated his career objective was to aspire to become "an administrator at a school that is focused on and committed to excellence in all areas, in the classroom, in athletics, in fine arts, and in building positive and long-lasting relationships with students, parents, alumni, community members, and supporters." This was the first evidence of the importance of relationships for Mr. Plum.

Interview Themes

Interviews between the researcher and participant took place via Zoom. The semi-structured interview allowed for a casual conversation about experiences as a dual-role administrator. Throughout the interview, and during data analysis of the interview recording with Derek Plum, specific themes became evident.

Relationships

One multifaceted theme that surfaced was relationships. It was multidimensional because it included relationships with students and staff members as well as the school board. Derek Plum, District 7, identified an advantage of serving as a dual-role administrator as, “I think you get to know people a lot better, especially with the students.” Mr. Plum shared about his first transition into the dual-role administrative position: “I was the middle school-high school principal before I became the middle school-high school principal and superintendent. I don’t think you could do that (dual-role position) if you didn’t know the district and have a relationship with the kids.”

Staff relationships were also identified as essential to be a successful dual-role administrator. “You really need to build positive relationships with people and trust people to do their job,” said Derek Plum. A prime reason for a dual-role administrator to trust staff members to perform their jobs was not having enough time to micromanage the activities of other educators. “You’re already dealing with a lot of stuff in a short period of time.” The relationship with school board members was also mentioned by Derek Plum. “We discuss things going on at the elementary at board meetings but I would say that their focus is on the superintendency more than the elementary principal.”

Time Constraints

The next theme was that of time constraints when serving as a dual-role administrator. Derek Plum stated, “If you look at your whole day, you go, ‘My God! How am I going to get it all done?’” When asked how he prioritized his multiple responsibilities, Mr. Plum responded with,

I really base it on what needs to be done and what order. Sometimes superintendent priorities trump principal priorities. But there are some things when you’re principal you’ve got to deal with right away, too. It all needs to be dealt with.

Within the theme of time constraints, the feeling of being overwhelmed and the fear of burnout were also apparent. In a previous school district, Mr. Plum’s school board decided to change the administrative position to a single role because “they knew they were gonna [sic] wear me out in a hurry if it (dual-role) continued and there were some things I was falling behind on.” The continual barrier of time management evolved from the number of responsibilities Mr. Plum experienced as a dual-role administrator. He again explained, “You’re dealing with a lot of stuff in a short period of time, and it all needs to be dealt with.”

Observational Data

The final data from District 7 was gathered through an in-person observation. The observation occurred for approximately two hours during midday in Mr. Plum’s office. The dates of the observations were selected for a routine day without any particularly planned interruptions, meetings, or celebrations. However, there was winter weather which impacted the observation due to possible school closure. Thus, the observation was shortened because Mr. Plum had to investigate the road conditions in his school district. During the observation, we toured different parts of the elementary school on two separate occasions. Before lunch, we

toured the west wing of the elementary building and then after lunch, we toured the east wing. During both tours, Mr. Plum greeted staff and students by their names in the hallways and classrooms. He also explained the function of each classroom or office area. While relationships were a theme in his interview, this was the only evidence of the importance of relationships during the observation.

Superintendent responsibilities consumed 82% of Derek Plum's time during the observation, while the remaining 18% were principal duties. Responsibilities coded as superintendent included the following: school board report, advertising for a speech-language pathologist opening, district-wide calendar, and weather closing decisions. Conversing with a teacher and student communication were examples of his principal responsibilities. When the lens of situational leadership theory was applied to the observation data, 63% of the decisions were directive, and 37% of the time, decisions were classified as supportive. Directive leadership duties, described by Northouse (2019) as helping group members accomplish a goal, included directing the secretary to send a message about the calendar and posting a job opening on a website. Mr. Plum inquired with a teacher about a safe route to travel and asked the transportation director what he thought about road conditions. Both activities were classified as supportive leadership behaviors which commonly involved two-way communication between the administrator and the employee.

During the observation of Derek Plum, communication was the most evident theme. He communicated with his entire district staff with an email containing a report from the previous night's school board meeting. Mr. Plum also spoke with a local business owner via telephone and a phone conference with District 7's high school and middle school principal. During the

data analysis of the dual-role administrator in District 7, the themes of relationships, time constraints, and communication were most frequently identified.

District 11 Demographic Information

School District 11, also a pseudonym, was another small school district in rural South Dakota. The population of the town in which School District 11 is located was about 600, based on the 2020 census. It was neither the county seat nor the most populous city in the county. School District 11 employed one individual who served as superintendent and elementary principal and another individual who served as high school and middle school principal. Table 3 displays data from the state’s Department of Education website regarding the enrollment and staffing of the district, as well as graduation and attendance rates.

Table 3

School District 7 Demographic Data (From the State Department of Education’s Website)

School District 11	Population	Graduation Rate	Attendance Rate
Total K–12 Enrollment (2021–2022)	176	100%	93.9%
Students with Disabilities	12.0%		
Economically Disadvantaged	31.3%		
Staffing			
Certified Instructional Staff (FTE)		17.8	
Student-to-Teacher Ratio		10.3:1	
Administrative Salaries Budget		\$212,992	

For this study, the dual-role administrator was interviewed and observed. Devin Fuller, about 35-years-old, served as a school administrator for seven years. His administrative experiences included serving as an elementary principal for three years in District 11 before transitioning to the role of superintendent-elementary principal. He was in his first five years in the superintendent-elementary principal role in the district. All of Devin’s professional

experience in education was in District 11. He began as a student-teacher and coach about 10 years ago and remained in the district. School District 11 employed two dual-role administrators in the last twenty years.

Document Analysis

Various records were available on District 11's website, the state's Department of Education's website, the School Administrators of South Dakota website, and provided by the dual-role administrator. The school district website contained school board agendas, minutes, and improvement plans. The South Dakota Department of Education's website provided the demographics and financial status of District 11 through a statistical digest document. The School Administrators of South Dakota (SASD) website provided the salary of the dual-role administrators. The last documents reviewed were Devin Fuller's resume and job evaluation tool. This tool was the method used for annual evaluations of Mr. Fuller. The tool was completed by school board members, certified staff members, and hourly employees.

Board of Education Agendas and Minutes

The Board of Education agendas and minutes for District 11 outlined topics discussed during meetings and decisions made by the members of the Board of Education. Board agendas and minutes reviewed were from the years 2021 and 2022. Devin Fuller shared information with the Board as both the superintendent and the elementary principal. Topics shared as a superintendent by Mr. Fuller included COVID-19 plans, building projects, policies, financial decisions, economic development, and district accreditation. He also shared the following principal topics: (a) school improvement plans; (b) truancy; (c) Section 504; (d) sports participation; (e) student handbooks; (f) student programming; and (g) marching band uniforms. Additional topics discussed in the Board of Education minutes, which could have been the

responsibility of either the superintendent or principal role were teacher in-service planning, Title programs, state curriculum standards, and grant awards. The frequency of superintendent topics at board meetings in District 11 was 56%, while the number of topics under the principal's responsibility was 25%. Educational topics categorized as either superintendent or principal responsibilities in District 11 occurred 19% of the time.

School Improvement Plan

In addition to the Board of Education documents, the School District Improvement Plan was readily accessible via the district's website. District 11's plan included a mission statement, vision statement, goals, and professional development needs for the entire district. District 11's school improvement plan was updated during the 2021–2022 school year. Two emerging needs identified in the plan were “communicating priorities with school staff members” and “being innovative and engaging in communication with all stakeholders.” These needs identify the importance of communication in a school district where a dual-role administrative position was utilized.

SASD Salary Report

The School Administrators of South Dakota published an annual salary report for public school districts in the state. It was interesting to note District 11 reported Devin Fuller's FTE as 1.0 superintendent and did not designate the elementary principal role. Thus, his reported salary was based only on his superintendent position.

Resume

Analysis of Mr. Fuller's resume allowed for a better understanding of his leadership characteristics, professional goals, and experiences. When analyzing Devin Fuller's resume, it was evident that he was active in various professional organizations. He held memberships with

the School Administrators of South Dakota (SD), the National Athletic Administrator's Association, SD Elementary School Principals, and an additional statewide coaching association. These networks of colleagues reiterated the importance of relationships to Mr. Fuller.

Evaluation Tool

District 11 used a comprehensive evaluation tool for the dual-role administrator. It was based on the following six standards: (a) shared vision; (b) culture of learning; (c) leadership & management; (d) family and community; (e) ethics; and (f) societal context. Directive and supportive leadership behaviors were indicated when the situational leadership theory lens was applied to this tool. Directive behaviors were included in the indicators of shared vision, leadership and management, and family and community. These standards had an expectation that the dual-role administrator provided guidance to the district, often with one-way communication. On the other hand, supportive leadership behaviors were woven within the indicators of the culture of learning, ethics, societal context, and also family and community. For example, an indicator of the culture of learning standard was the administrator "nurtured and sustained a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations." To achieve this standard, supportive leadership behaviors had to be utilized to attain this expectation (e.g., listening, praising, and developing relationships).

This evaluation tool also indicated the themes of using a team approach and the importance of relationships. The following indicators upheld the team approach and relationship themes: developed the leadership capacity through quality professional development and sustained productive relationships with community partners. Themes are discussed in more detail below.

District Website

Devin Fuller stated on District 11's webpage, "Because I grew up in a rural community and school district, I have built many positive relationships and enjoyed working together with all District 11 patrons to accomplish a common goal of providing the best education for our students." This statement supported the common themes of the importance of relationships and a team approach when serving as a dual-role administrator.

Interview Themes

Throughout the interview with the dual-role administrator, Devin Fuller, in District 11, he described his experience as, "Ensuring that you got an open door to whatever is gonna [sic] come. It might be a student or staff issue, it might be a policy that you have to improve, and I think you gotta [sic] be super flexible." As I reflected on the recordings and transcripts of the interview, themes continued to emerge regarding the experiences of District 11's dual-role administrator. These themes were relationships and time constraints.

Relationships

One multifaceted theme that surfaced was relationships. It was multifaceted because it included relationships with students, staff, colleagues, and community members. Devin Fuller described this sentiment, "I think that is the coolest part, you can still do the superintendent work, but still be able to keep relationships with the kids." He also identified a highlight of his day was when he could spend time in the kindergarten classroom.

Staff relationships were also identified as essential to being a successful dual-role administrator. "The staff kind of need to know I'm here for you. I think you can put your heart on your sleeve and show it." Key components of relationships in District 11 identified in the interview were transparency and communication. Mr. Fuller shared, "as long as I'm transparent

and communicate, they're pretty respectful." Because he valued relationships, Devin Fuller identified "knowing you're not going to make everyone happy" was one of the largest challenges of the administrative position.

Time Constraints

Another theme was time constraints when serving as a dual-role administrator. Devin Fuller shared, "There's really never a free minute throughout the day. People don't really understand that you're just trying to go on to the next thing or the next checklist." However, he provided a reflection that indicated his staff might understand his time constraints, "One of the things that was in my evaluation is staff are worried about burnout of me." Devin Fuller described the especially difficult first few years as a dual-role administrator,

Not only are you trying to get a job done, or two jobs done, you're trying to balance family, too. I would have to say in my first year or two, I didn't do a very good job with that. Work always came first, and I was on my phone at night, trying to just keep steady. And my family suffered from that.

Due to the time constraints of his position, Mr. Fuller believed that organization and the ability to work hard also impacted his job performance. "I think the more organized, and how I juggle my time, help me kind of stay afloat, or at least feel like it's all right."

Observational Data

The observation occurred in District 11 with Devin Fuller during morning hours on a routine school day. I tracked the activity of Mr. Fuller electronically on my laptop while I conducted the observation. While he performed tasks, I typed a description of his tasks in a Microsoft Excel document. During the three hours of observation, Mr. Fuller performed principal duties 60% of the time and superintendent duties 40% of the time. Principal duties

included addressing student illnesses, student behavior problems, teacher evaluations, scheduling, and lunch duties. The majority of Mr. Fuller's superintendent duties revolved around the decision to close or delay school due to winter weather. However, he also researched legislative bills that pertained to education and determined the status of a foreign exchange student for District 11's high school graduation ceremony.

Through the lens of situational leadership theory, his leadership behavior was categorized as 57% supportive and 43% directive. An example of supportive leadership was when a staff member asked about extending days for the after-school program as seven sessions were missed due to winter weather closings. He promptly responded with, "What do you want to do?" Following the staff member's response, he said, "I'm fine with either option." This two-way communication was a characteristic of supportive leadership. On the contrary, directive leadership behaviors included typing teacher evaluations and completing the transportation calendar for the following week. Mr. Fuller made the final decision regarding these situations and communicated them to District 11's staff for compliance.

Observation Themes

The situational leadership approach required Devin Fuller to be flexible, which was apparent in the variety of tasks he completed during the observation timeframe. These tasks and his response to the tasks allowed for themes to be developed for a more thorough understanding of the dual-role administrative position. Upon completion of the observation in District 11, I reviewed the field notes, direct quotations, and paraphrases to determine common themes during the observation.

Relationships

During the observation, it was evident that Mr. Fuller valued relationships. He addressed each student and staff member in the hallway by name. Additionally, he congratulated a high school student on earning student of the month. Mr. Fuller asked the student, “Do you know what you did to get student of the month?” After the student replied that he did not know why he was selected as student of the month, Devin replied, “For being awesome!” The high school student smiled as he continued to class. Even the location of Devin Fuller’s office represented relationships. His office was a former classroom located at the center of the building. His door remained open during the entirety of the observation. Not only did Mr. Fuller speak to the importance of relationships during the interview, but it was also apparent during the observation in the way he interacted with his staff members, specifically the secretary and the technology coordinator. He warmly greeted both of these individuals, thanked them for their help, and asked how he could be of assistance in both of the tasks they were charged with completing.

Communication

Like the interview and data analysis findings, communication emerged as an important theme in District 11. For instance, Mr. Fuller spent time developing the calendar for the following week. This calendar included transportation arrangements, departure times, activities, and administrative meetings. He also printed and handed out the completed calendar to staff members. During the observation, he communicated with constituents via telephone, text message, email, radio, and face-to-face. He contacted the school cooks to gather information regarding serving lunch in the event they had a weather closure. Not only did Devin Fuller communicate with constituents within District 11, but he also texted area superintendents about their decisions for weather closures in respective school districts.

Team Approach

In three separate instances during the same observation session, I observed Mr. Fuller using a team approach to make decisions for District 11. He asked different individuals for their thoughts and ideas regarding the after-school program, remote learning, and track meet workers. Although he could have quickly made a decision for each scenario, he took the time to gather feedback from employees to gain trust and strengthen relationships before making the final decision. For example, the special education director asked Mr. Fuller if the center-base students should travel tomorrow. He responded, “I’m thinking remote learning would be more valuable; what do you think?”

Comparative Case Analysis

The data analysis on the dual-role administrators in District 7 and District 11 allowed for a comparative case study. Each district and dual-role administrator had unique situations, backgrounds, and school district demographics. The following paragraphs summarized the comparison between the experiences of the two dual-role administrators in rural South Dakota school districts.

Similarities

Time Constraints. Throughout the interviews with both Derek Plum and Devin Fuller, time constraints were the most frequent theme. Both individuals commented on the workload of performing two full-time jobs as one person. They agreed that they each spent roughly half of their time as superintendents and the other half as principals. Derek Plum described the dual-role position as, “You’re responsible for the entire district. That includes all aspects, you got buildings, budgets, and staff and students. You have so much coming at you at one time.” Devin Fuller echoed the same sentiment, as mentioned earlier: “There’s not enough time in the day.

There's really never a free minute through the day. People don't really understand that you're just trying to go on to the next thing or the next checklist." Mr. Plum compared the dual-role position to when he served in a superintendent-only role, "When I was just superintendent, there were some days like at 2:00 p.m., I'd be looking around wondering what there was to do. Most superintendents won't ever admit to that."

As an effect of time constraints, the feeling of being overwhelmed and the fear of burnout were apparent to the participants. Derek Plum shared, "There are some days you can feel overwhelmed. Especially when you have staff out and you have to sub (in a classroom). And winter weather sure doesn't help." Another example of being overwhelmed was stated by Devin Fuller, "There are just multiple things that are handed down each year that just continue to grow and grow, and there's only so much you can delegate."

Relationships. "You really need to build positive relationships with people and trust people to do their job," shared Derek Plum. This theme of relationships was distinct in all areas of the study. These relationships involved students, staff, and community members. He continued to explain, "Superintendents in bigger schools probably get to visit (school) buildings, but they don't really get to know students and staff that well. I think that's an advantage" of dual-role administrative positions. Relationships were mentioned in the interviews of both dual-role administrators. Devin Fuller recalled the reason he chose education was for relationships, and being a dual-role administrator allowed him to continue cultivating those meaningful relationships:

I've talked to superintendents in bigger schools, and they might not even have an office onsite or on campus. I think we all did this (education) for students and kids, so that's the relationship that I like the most. If you walk into a kindergarten classroom, that's what

brightens your day. I think that is the coolest part is you can still do the superintendent work while still being able to keep relationships with the kids.

There was less evidence of the importance of relationships in Mr. Plum's observation and document analysis. However, he spoke to this theme several times during the interview. When asked an advantage of serving as a dual-role administrator, he replied, "I think you get to know people a lot better, especially in the students, which I think is an asset."

Team Approach. The theme of a team approach was apparent in both case studies. The participants both agreed that they needed help to fulfill their numerous responsibilities. "I think you just need to tell people you can't do it all yourself. We're in this together. I think that you need to build that culture of it; just help each other out when you need to," explained Derek Plum. He also stated, "You have to learn to delegate some of the smaller tasks that people can do that really aren't that impactful, but they have to be done." Devin Fuller shared the same outlook,

I think the more you can get more people on the same page, the better off you're going to be, because those departments, those other employees will kind of take care of their area, so you don't have to worry so much about it.

Both participants felt because they were one person employed for two roles, they had to rely on others to be successful.

Differences

The overall tone of the dual-role administrative position was strikingly different between District 7 and District 11. Mr. Fuller identified more positive aspects of the position, including having a passion for his career. On the other hand, Mr. Plum spoke about the feeling of being overwhelmed and the fear of burnout during his interview. This difference was potentially attributable to the number of years and the number of school districts in which both participants

were involved. The 30-year age difference between the participants might have also factored into this difference of opinions.

Another difference was the level of commitment to the districts. Mr. Plum shared, “I think you really gotta [sic] decide that at the end of the day when you walk out of the building, you just gotta [sic] leave it behind, and know I did my best and forget the rest. You can’t take it home.” On the contrary, Mr. Fuller shared that the dual-role administrative position is a “24-7 job.”

You might be at your own child’s wrestling tournament on a Saturday at 11:00 and you might be getting called about an issue. So I just think you gotta [sic] keep an open mind to it but also know that I don’t want to be the person to say ‘Don’t call me,’ because I’d rather address it when it is an issue or try to have somewhat of a plan put together.

Mr. Fuller admitted that he made improvements with his work-family balance compared to his first few years in the dual-role administrative position.

Assertions

Creswell and Poth (2018) defined assertions as when a researcher made sense of the case study data and provided an interpretation of the data. With both case studies in this research, the situational leadership theory aligned with the job responsibilities of superintendents and principals and superintendent-principals. During the observation in District 7, the use of directive leadership was 63%, and supportive leadership was 37%, while the responsibilities by the dual-role administrator was 82% superintendent and 18% principal. Although the results in District 11 showed a higher quantity of principal responsibilities at 60%, the supportive leadership traits aligned with 57% of occurrences. Within these two case studies, it was apparent that principal

responsibilities equated to supportive leadership behaviors while superintendent responsibilities required directive leadership behaviors.

I also ascertained the essential qualities for a successful dual-role leader to be aware of were time constraints, the importance of relationships, and using a team approach. The participants in this research study had been dual-role administrators for almost five and 10 years. Inexperienced and aspiring school dual-role leaders would benefit from understanding the impact and importance of the themes found in District 7 and District 11.

Summary

Based on the documents, interviews, and observations, an understanding of and answers to the research questions were achieved. Perceptions and actions of dual-role administrators in rural South Dakota emerged through specific themes: (a) time constraints; (b) relationships; and (c) using a team approach. However, these results were specific to two rural public school districts and could not be generalized to all dual-role administrative positions. The thick context provided allowed for evaluation of transferability to other contexts. Chapter 5 contains the research in the format of a journal manuscript.

Chapter 5

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this case study was to explore the perceived barriers, opportunities, and responsibilities of dual-role school administrators. The specific style of case study, comparative, allowed producing new knowledge about this complex role. By interviewing and observing two practitioners and reviewing documents, I provided an in-depth investigation of the cases. As a result of this study, there is an increased understanding of the day-to-day operations of dual-role administrators. Namely, this research also aimed to fill a gap in the literature regarding understanding this unique educational leader. This research adds to the literature by understanding dual-role administrators from a situational leadership lens. Specifically, this research sought to understand barriers and methods of prioritization of responsibilities and duties of dual-role administrators.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the perceived opportunities and barriers of dual-role administration positions?
2. How do dual-role leaders use directive and supportive leadership behaviors?
3. How are administrative responsibilities prioritized by an individual in a dual-role position?

Theoretical Framework

Dual-role administrators juggled many job duties to effectively serve their schools and communities (Curry & Wolf, 2017; Lehnen, 2020; Rasmussen, De Jong & Aderhold, 2018). In the past, school superintendents served in managerial roles. More recently, in addition to being a manager, superintendents were expected to serve as planners, listeners, communicators, and

community activists (Copeland, 2013). The principal role began as the school disciplinarian and the teacher supervisor in the early 1800s (Lynch, 2012). In more recent educational settings, principals were expected to be instructional leaders, providing support for improving student achievement and monitoring student performance (Pendola & Fuller, 2018). As rural school budgets began to dwindle, the positions of superintendent and principal more commonly became one position. In South Dakota, superintendents were often called to serve in a dual-role capacity (Yates & De Jong, 2018). As dual-role leaders' responsibilities changed, it also became crucial to shift educational leadership strategies.

Situational leadership theory (SLT), developed by Hersey and Blanchard, recognized that different situations require different types of leadership (Northouse, 2019). Effective leaders had to moderate other behaviors (Blank et al., 1990). The elements of leadership, as defined by Hersey and Blanchard, included directive behaviors and supportive behaviors (Northouse, 2019). The aspects of directive behaviors were: (a) giving directions; (b) establishing goals; (c) setting times; and (d) defining roles. An example of directive leadership behavior was telling an employee a task they must complete in a certain time frame. Supportive behaviors included: (a) two-way communication; (b) social and emotional support; and (c) helping followers feel comfortable about themselves and their co-workers (Northouse, 2019). Asking followers for feedback regarding a change in curriculum would be an example of supportive leadership.

The comparative case study research herein recognized responsibilities, leadership practices, and rural education related to dual-role administrators. However, like rural education, the dual-role administrator position had nuances and characteristics unique to administrative functions. SLT has the potential to assist dual-role leaders in developing their practices. After a thorough examination of the literature, to the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first

study of dual-role administrators that employed SLT. Specifically, directive leadership behaviors and supportive leadership behaviors were identified as components of dual-role administration.

Rural Education

The common characteristic of school districts who employed dual-role administrators was they served in rural districts. The United States Census Bureau defined a rural area as neither a city with a population of 50,000 or more nor a cluster of towns and cities with a minimum of 2,500 people each and a maximum of 50,000 people combined (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Doerksen & Wise (2016) found that “57% of school districts in the United States [were] located in rural areas and [served] 24% of the U.S. student population” (p. 62). Researchers identified that nearly 7.5 million public school students were enrolled in rural districts during the 2016–17 school year (Showalter, 2019).

Parson and Hunter (2019) found a specific challenge in rural settings: the candidate pool shortage for open positions. Often, a job opening might only have one applicant (Parson & Hunter, 2019). Myers (2011) explained that rural superintendencies were known for being a “temporary position” with frequent turnover (p. 47). Also, in a rural setting, school administrators were expected to be “[jacks] of all trades” (Lamkin, 2006, p. 20). Similarly, Lamkin (2006) noted that there needed to be an improved understanding of the challenges of small-school administrators to prepare individuals better to be superintendents in rural districts.

Rural Education and Dual-Role Leadership

The dual-role administrator had to lead a district as the superintendent and manage the day-to-day activities as a building principal. Canales (2008) recognized that dual-role administrators faced the significant challenge of performing multiple job responsibilities. While the school district’s size was typically less than 500 students for dual-role administrators, the

workload was similar to larger communities (Rasmussen et al., 2018; Doerksen & Wise, 2016). According to Forner et al. (2012), dual-role leaders were involved in every operational and standards-setting decision in a rural district. Smart's (2019) research aimed to help individuals understand the impact of professional isolation on rural superintendent principals. Yates and De Jong (2018) documented the rewarding aspects of a dual-role school administrator as assisting students in succeeding, helping staff achieve goals, making decisions, and completing diverse tasks. Also noted were the challenges of working in a rural area as a dual-role administrator: (a) family time; (b) budget constraints; (c) politics; (d) lack of personal time; and (e) difficult decisions (Yates & De Jong, 2018). Single-handedly balancing the responsibility of school board governance and student discipline issues was an example of one of the vast arrays of dual-role administrator duties.

Administrative Responsibilities

The responsibilities of school administrators that served in a singular role (superintendent or principal) were researched for several decades. Superintendent and principal responsibilities might share similarities; however, each position held different priorities. The most effective and engaged school administrators could provide leadership in times of crisis while laying out optimistic visions for the future of their districts. As Geivett (2010) explained, dual-role administrators had to constantly balance tradition, student preparation for post-high school, and the need for innovation, among many other responsibilities. The research was much scatter regarding the duties of a dual-role administrator (Curry & Wolf, 2017). It was understood that the dual-role administrator was ultimately responsible for all duties the superintendent and principal upheld individually.

Canales et al. (2008) wrote, “Multiple roles and responsibilities of the dual position may impede the educational leader’s ability to lead effectively” (p. 1). Another study showed teachers preferred dual-role administrators spend more time on management, while dual-role administrators preferred more time on leadership and instructional coaching (Rasmussen et al., 2018). Copeland (2013) found that although the enrollment size of dual-role administrative districts was typically small, the duties and responsibilities required of small school administrators were not lessened because one individual was filling a dual role. Research indicated the system of checks and balances with state and federal government agencies for reporting district activities was the same for singular positions as for dual-role administrators (Tulppo, 2022).

Leadership Practices

It was important to note that a school administrator with effective leadership practices would positively impact constituents (Marzano et al., 2001). It took unique leadership skills to succeed in an individual school administrative role and even more remarkable skills in a dual-role position. First, research on leadership behaviors, or leadership skills, delves into what was needed to succeed as a single-role administrator before practices of effective dual-role administrators are identified.

Forner et al. (2012) recognized rural leadership practices related to Marzano’s research. Seven effective methods were found within Forner’s study of superintendents: (a) establishing goals; (b) supporting reform; (c) confronting struggling students and teachers; (d) removing low-performing teachers and principals; (e) working closely with building principals; (f) focusing on student needs during contract negotiations; and (g) aligning financial commitments to district priorities. Kowalski (2013) recognized that an effective superintendent had leadership skills,

including communication, collaboration, and consensus-building. These leadership practices were utilized outside school walls with community members and within the school buildings with staff members and students.

As another school administrative position, principals shaped the daily interactions within a school building. Quality school leadership from a principal was second only to classroom instruction in influencing student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). A principal's effectiveness was directly tied to positive classroom results (Blase & Blase, 2004). Winn et al. (2009) found that the leadership skills of rural principals in high-academic schools differed from principals in lower-rated rural districts. In this study, rural principals who focused on mastery in the programming domain addressed the school's instructional needs by utilizing collaborative leadership, which resulted in high achievement. Skills included in the programming domain were instructional management, curriculum design, staff development, and measurement/evaluation.

While effective leadership practices were essential for any school administrator, it was crucial to look at the practices of those serving in a dual-role position. Lehen's (2020) research explained that one person could be successful in a dual-role position if they utilized effective leadership behaviors, such as communication, monitoring goals, outreach, and flexibility. Other studies were not as clear about the effective practices of dual-role administrators. Despite inconclusive evidence as to what was considered best practices in the evolving role of dual-role administrators, one thing rang authentic—effective leadership was challenging when serving in two roles (Canales et al., 2008; Rasmussen et al., 2018).

Rural Education and Dual-Role Leadership

The dual-role administrator needed to lead a district as the superintendent and manage the day-to-day activities as a building principal. Canales (2008) recognized that dual-role

administrators faced the significant challenge of performing multiple job responsibilities. According to Forner et al. (2012), dual-role leaders were involved in every operational and standards-setting decision in a rural district. Smart's (2019) research aimed to help individuals understand the impact of professional isolation on rural superintendent principals. Yates and De Jong (2018) documented the rewarding aspects of a dual-role school administrator as assisting students in succeeding, helping staff achieve goals, making decisions, and completing diverse tasks. Also noted were the challenges of working in a rural area as a dual-role administrator: (a) family time; (b) budget constraints; (c) politics; (d) lack of personal time; and (e) difficult decisions (Yates & De Jong, 2018). Single-handedly balancing the responsibility of school board governance and student discipline issues was an example of one of the vast arrays of dual-role administrator duties. In order to better understand the complex position, this study will utilize multiple pieces of data to analyze the barriers, opportunities, and responsibilities of a dual-role administrator.

Methodology

This comparative case study examined dual-role administrators in a descriptive, investigative manner. The case study format allowed the comparison of two school districts within the same state that each employed one individual that served as both superintendent and elementary principal simultaneously. The analysis of documents established a framework for understanding, while interviews and observations led to a more profound knowledge of the dual-role administrative position.

Participants

The dual-role administrators were chosen because of the difference in their backgrounds. Derek Plum, approximately 60 years old, had administrative experience in several school

districts in three different Midwest states. He retired twice but returned to a new district to serve as a dual-role administrator in a rural South Dakota School at District 7 (a pseudonym). On the contrary, Devin Fuller, approximately 35 years old, was only employed in one school district as a student-teacher, coach, certified teacher, and administrator during his educational career. He was employed in District 11 (a pseudonym).

Data Collection and Analysis

School board minutes were reviewed before the participant interviews and various records were available on the school districts' website, the state's Department of Education website, the School Administrators of South Dakota website, and provided by the dual-role administrators. The school district website contained school board agendas, minutes, and recent school improvement plans. The Department of Education website provided the demographics and financial status of the districts through a statistical digest document. The School Administrators of South Dakota (SASD) website provided the salary and full-time equivalent of the dual-role administrators. The participant's resumes and Fuller's evaluation tool were also analyzed.

The final data was gathered through observations. The observation occurred in each district for two or three hours on a routine school day. I tracked the activity of Mr. Fuller and Mr. Plum. The activities were then identified as a superintendent or principal's responsibility, supportive or directive leadership behavior, and then coded with relevant themes.

Upon completion of data transcription, the researcher began the data analysis process following Yin's (2018) recommended approach of "playing" with the data while looking for patterns, themes, and commonalities. The codes related to leadership reflected the supportive behaviors and directive behaviors as identified by SLT.

Participants engaged in member checking, reading the transcripts for accuracy and reliability and trustworthiness. A second coder was utilized with a subset of the transcriptions to help avoid bias. Having multiple coders provided another perspective through a different set of lenses than the individual researcher. Codes were checked during data analysis of interviews, observation, and document review. Follow-up interviews with individual participants allowed me to clarify information gathered in the initial interview and fill gaps in the interview data. During data analysis, field notes were used as a means of documenting contextual information. Reflexive journaling was used to acknowledge my thinking and biases and to see the issues more objectively. Based on Shenton's (2004) criteria for trustworthiness in a study, the transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability of this research were well-developed.

Results of the Comparative Case Analysis

The data analysis on the dual-role administrators in District 7 and District 11 allowed for a comparative case study. Each district and dual-role administrator had a unique situation, background, and school district demographics. The following paragraphs summarized the comparison between the experiences of the two dual-role administrators in rural South Dakota school districts.

Similarities

Time Constraints. Throughout the interviews with both Derek Plum and Devin Fuller, time constraints were the most frequent theme. Both individuals commented on the workload of performing two full-time jobs as one person. They agreed that they each spent roughly half of their time as superintendents and the other half as principals. Derek Plum described the dual-role position as, "You're responsible for the entire district. That includes all aspects, you got buildings, budgets, and staff and students. You have so much coming at you at one time." Devin

Fuller echoed the same sentiment, as mentioned earlier: “There’s not enough time in the day. There’s really never a free minute throughout the day. People don’t really understand that you’re just trying to go on to the next thing or the next checklist.” Mr. Plum compared the dual-role position to when he served in a superintendent-only role, “When I was just superintendent, there were some days like at 2:00 p.m., I’d be looking around wondering what there was to do. Most superintendents won’t ever admit to that.”

As an effect of time constraints, the feeling of being overwhelmed and the fear of burnout were apparent to the participants. Derek Plum shared, “There are some days you can feel overwhelmed. Especially when you have staff out and you have to sub (in a classroom). And winter weather sure doesn’t help.” Another example of being overwhelmed was stated by Devin Fuller, “There are just multiple things that are handed down each year that just continue to grow and grow, and there’s only so much you can delegate.”

Relationships. “You really need to build positive relationships with people and trust people to do their job,” shared Derek Plum. This theme of relationships was distinct in all areas of the study. These relationships involved students, staff, and community members. He continued to explain, “Superintendents in bigger schools probably get to visit (school) buildings, but they don’t really get to know students and staff that well. I think that’s an advantage” of dual-role administrative positions. Relationships were mentioned in the interviews of both dual-role administrators. Devin Fuller recalled the reason he chose education was for relationships, and being a dual-role administrator allowed him to continue cultivating those meaningful relationships:

I’ve talked to superintendents in bigger schools, and they might not even have an office onsite or on campus. I think we all did this (education) for students and kids, so that’s the

relationship that I like the most. If you walk into a kindergarten classroom, that's what brightens your day. I think that is the coolest part is you can still do the superintendent work while still being able to keep relationships with the kids.

There was less evidence of the importance of relationships in Mr. Plum's observation and document analysis. However, he spoke to this theme several times during the interview. When asked an advantage of serving as a dual-role administrator, he replied, "I think you get to know people a lot better, especially in the students, which I think is an asset."

Team Approach. The theme of a team approach was evident in both case studies. The participants both agreed that they needed help to fulfill their numerous responsibilities. "I think you just need to tell people you can't do it all yourself. We're in this together. I think that you need to build that culture of it; just help each other out when you need to," explained Derek Plum. He also stated, "You have to learn to delegate some of the smaller tasks that people can do that really aren't that impactful, but they have to be done." Devin Fuller shared the same outlook,

I think the more you can get more people on the same page, the better off you're going to be, because those departments, those other employees will kind of take care of their area, so you don't have to worry so much about it.

Both participants felt because they were one person employed for two roles, they had to rely on others to be successful.

Differences

The overall tone of the dual-role administrative position was strikingly different between District 7 and District 11. Mr. Fuller identified more positive aspects of the position, including having a passion for his career. On the other hand, Mr. Plum spoke about the feeling of being overwhelmed and the fear of burnout during his interview. This difference was potentially

attributable to the number of years and the number of school districts in which both participants were involved. The 30-year age difference between the participants might have also factored into this difference of opinions.

Another difference was the level of commitment to the districts. Mr. Plum shared, “I think you really gotta [sic] decide that at the end of the day when you walk out of the building, you just gotta [sic] leave it behind, and know I did my best and forget the rest. You can’t take it home.” On the contrary, Mr. Fuller shared that the dual-role administrative position is a “24-7 job.”

You might be at your own child’s wrestling tournament on a Saturday at 11:00 and you might be getting called about an issue. So I just think you gotta [sic] keep an open mind to it but also know that I don’t want to be the person to say ‘Don’t call me,’ because I’d rather address it when it is an issue or try to have somewhat of a plan put together.

Mr. Fuller admitted that he made improvements with his work-family balance compared to his first few years in the dual-role administrative position.

Assertions

With both case studies in this research, SLT aligned with the job responsibilities of superintendents and principals and superintendent-principals. During the observation in District 7, the use of directive leadership was 63%, and supportive leadership was 37%, while the responsibilities by the dual-role administrator was 82% superintendent and 18% principal. Although the results in District 11 showed a higher quantity of principal responsibilities at 60%, the supportive leadership traits aligned with 57% of occurrences. Within these two case studies, it was apparent that principal responsibilities equated to supportive leadership behaviors while superintendent responsibilities required directive leadership behaviors.

The essential qualities for a successful dual-role leader to be aware of were time constraints, the importance of relationships, and using a team approach. The participants in this research study had been dual-role administrators for almost five and 10 years. Inexperienced and aspiring school dual-role leaders would benefit from understanding the impact and importance of the themes found in District 7 and District 11.

Limitations

There were a few limitations to this study. First, due to winter weather and road conditions, both observations were shorter in length than originally planned. Secondly, I chose to only interview the dual-role leader. I did not gain the perspective of dual-role administrators from school board members or school employees.

Further, both dual-role administrators in this study were male. Future research should examine dual-role administrators who are also female to ascertain the barriers they face serving as both a principal and superintendent simultaneously. Additionally, at the individual level, both administrators had been in their dual roles for five and 10 years, which would have allowed a long period of time for adaptation into this unique role. Future research should examine new dual-role administrators to understand the challenges presented in adapting to this position. Finally, only rural dual-role administrators in South Dakota were studied. Other rural districts might have additional concerns regarding their dual roles not covered in this study.

Positionality Statement

As the primary researcher for this study, I am positioned to see the perspective of a dual-role administrative position on several levels. As a current dual-role administrator, I have a strong understanding of the position. However, as I used the reflexive journals, I was able to bracket my own experiences to get a true sense of Derek Plum and Devin Fuller's understanding.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to learn about the dual-role administrative position in rural South Dakota school districts. As Geivett (2010) recognized, the dual-role administrator position is often a “misunderstood and unrecognized position” (p. 14) that is under public scrutiny. School district patrons frequently do not realize the complex workload of a dual-role administrator, which leads to unrealistic expectations of the individual performing dual-role administrative duties. Exploring districts’ documents, interviews, and observations proved that those serving as dual-role administrators had a difficult job of managing two positions simultaneously.

The main difficulty surrounded the fact that these individuals do not have enough time in their day to fulfill responsibilities of both roles. While they had a lower enrollment number than the average school district in South Dakota, the “work expectations and requirements are not necessarily similarly decreased for reporting, management functions, school board, and community relations” (Rasmussen, 2018, p. 55).

Another finding in this study was the importance of relationships as a dual-role administrator. Relationships with students, staff, and community members were apparent in all three areas of data collection (documents, interviews, and observations). Yates (2018) had similar findings in his study regarding rural superintendent tenure—relationships needed to be established among stakeholders for a superintendent to be successful. It appears in District 7 and District 11, relationships were the positive component of serving in a complex, dual-role administrative position.

A method for managing the difficulties of a dual-role administrator is to implement a team approach. The participants identified communication, transparency, and delegation as

pieces of building an effective team to make decisions based on what is best for students. Being able to utilize the expertise of team members enabled the administrator to relieve time constraints of becoming an expert himself. However, the accountability of the entire district, and decisions made by individuals or a team, was ultimately the dual-role administrators’.

Considering the theoretical framework of the study, situational leadership reflected on the type of decisions made by a leader. During the observation in District 7, the use of directive leadership was 63%, and supportive leadership was 37%, while the responsibilities by the dual-role administrator was 82% superintendent and 18% principal. Although the results in District 11 showed a higher quantity of principal responsibilities at 60%, the supportive leadership traits aligned with 57% of occurrences. Within these two case studies, it was apparent that principal responsibilities equated to supportive leadership behaviors while superintendent responsibilities required directive leadership behaviors.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from the literature review and outcome of this study. The following conclusions emerged as a result of this comparative case study.

1. Dual-role administrators have time constraints, due to their multiple responsibilities, that impact their ability to fulfill their job duties.
2. Forming positive relationships with students, staff, and school board members allow dual-role administrators to remain committed to their jobs.
3. Utilizing a team approach to manage a school district as a dual-role administrator allows for efficient decisions, delegations, and shared responsibilities.
4. Supportive leadership behaviors align with principal responsibilities, while directive leadership behaviors align with superintendent responsibilities.

Recommendation for Practice

Understanding the context of a dual-role administrative position enabled aspiring rural school leaders to grasp critical components at the initiation of their positions. The themes and conclusions drawn from this study indicated that dual-role administrators deal with multiple issues on a daily basis. It is my goals that these recommendations will assist those who strive to be a rural school administrator, as well as those serving in a dual-role position currently. The trials and tribulations of Mr. Derek Plum and Mr. Devin Fuller can provide a roadmap and a level of understanding for board members, teachers, and community members.

Recommendations to support dual-role administrators included the following:

1. Effective time management skills, a focus on relationships, and the ability to utilize a team approach are needed for dual-role administrators to be successful in managing both roles. In order for this to be achieved, administrators should be presented with a realistic account of what dual-role administrators' work days might look like. For example, being aware of how duties might not be split neatly throughout a work day is important to understand for dual-role administrators and those who work with them. The Department of Education might have strict call times, as one example, and this switching of roles (between principal and superintendent) should be understood as typical for the dual-role administrator.
2. States that employ dual-role administrative positions must create professional development for those in this unique role to network, communicate, and support one another. Otherwise, these dual-role administrative positions might continue to see their high turnover rates.

3. School board members will benefit from the results of this study for a better understanding of the dual-role administrative position and how to support those serving in the dual-role position.

Recommendations for Further Study

There are numerous possibilities for future studies of dual-role leaders, including the following:

1. A study could research the burn-out and retention rates of dual-role administrators. This study could also focus on the mental health of dual-role administrators.
2. A comparison of situational leadership theory with dual-role leaders versus a singular administrative role would be useful in understanding the impact of SLT in school administration.

Summary

Rural school administrators have the ability to impact a large number of children. In order for rural education to be successful, the dual-role administrative position must be understood. Based on the documents, interviews, and observations, an understanding of and answers to the research questions were achieved. Perceptions and actions of dual-role administrators in rural South Dakota emerged through specific themes: (a) time constraints; (b) relationships; and (c) using a team approach. However, these results were specific to two public school districts and could not be generalized to all dual-role administrative positions. The thick context provided allowed for evaluation of transferability to other contexts. Nevertheless, dual-role administrators could benefit from effective time management, professional development, and discussing the unique considerations of their roles with school boards and fellow administrators.

While dual-role administrators can serve as a cost-effective solution, especially in rural areas experiencing shortages in administrative applicants, simultaneous principals and superintendents require better support to mitigate their high turnover rates. A better understanding of the challenges faced by dual-role administrators would help keep individuals in these roles. Being aware of what the day-to-day of a dual-role administrator encompasses is critical to keeping rural education thriving.

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Appendix A

Email to Potential Participants

From: Abi Van Regenmorter
To: Participant's Name
Date: November 2022
Subject: Dual-Role Case Study Request

Dear Participant's Name,

My name is Abi Van Regenmorter, and I am currently a doctoral student at the University of South Dakota. I am also superintendent/elementary principal at De Smet School District in De Smet, South Dakota. I am inviting you to participate in a research study. The purpose of my dissertation research study is to understand the day-to-day operations of dual-role public school administrators in our Midwestern state. This study will potentially benefit dual-role administrators through a better understanding for practitioners and school boards.

Your involvement in the study is entirely voluntary and will include individual interviews via Zoom. The first interview is expected to take approximately 45-60 minutes. A follow-up interview, if necessary, will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes and be conducted via Zoom. If you are willing to participate, the interviews will be recorded for transcription and data analysis purposes. Pseudonyms will be used in place of participants' names during the data analysis process. The interview will consist of open-ended questions regarding your experience as a dual-role school administrator. I will also conduct an observation of your workday at a time that is convenient for you. Public documents, such as school board minutes and policies, will be reviewed as well. If you choose to participate, you have the right to discontinue the study at any time. Transcripts of the interview will be returned to each participant for verified accuracy.

Before agreeing to participate, please read the attached Informed Consent Statement for additional details about the study. I would like to schedule interviews throughout December and January. If you agree to participate in the study, please contact me at abi.vanregenmorter@coyotes.usd.edu. I will work with you to find a time that best fits your schedule for an individual interview.

Thank you for your consideration,

Abi Van Regenmorter (Student Investigator)
abi.vanregenmorter@coyotes.usd.edu
Dr. Erin Lehmann (Principal Investigator)
erin.lehmann@usd.edu

Appendix B

USD Institutional Review Board: Participant Informed Consent Form

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent Statement**

Title of Project: The Art of Wearing Multiple Hats: A Case Study Analysis of Dual-Role Administrators in Rural School Districts

Principal Investigator: Erin Lehmann, Vermillion, SD 57069
(605) 677-5437 erin.lehmann@usd.edu

Other Investigators: Abi Van Regenmorter, De Smet, SD 57231
(605) 530-6156 abi.vanregenmorter@coyotes.usd.edu

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a dual-role administrator beyond your first year. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research project.

What is the study about and why are we doing it?

The purpose of the study is to understand the day-to-day operations of dual-role public school administrators in a Midwestern state. The day-to-day operations include rural dual-role administrators' roles, responsibilities, and experiences. At this stage in the research, a dual-role administrator will be generally defined as an individual who serves as a superintendent and principal simultaneously.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview via Zoom. This interview will take place at a time that is convenient for you. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes, and you will be assigned a pseudonym to ensure anonymity. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed for data analysis. To gain further information about your experience as a dual-role administrator, I will observe you during a routine workday for four hours. I will also review documents specific to your district regarding the dual-role administrative position. These documents may include Board of Education agendas, minutes, and job descriptions. The researcher will develop themes of the interviews, observations, and document review by synthesizing information from all participants. All data will be kept on a password-protected computer.

What risks might result from being in this study?

There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Participants may decline to answer any questions should they choose.

What are the benefits from this study?

Although you will not directly benefit from being in this study, others might benefit because of increased awareness about the dual-role administrator position. Your participation in this study may help future dual-role administrators prepare for and understand the complexities of the position as well as school boards.

How will we protect your information?

Each participant will be given a pseudonym to protect their identity. Only the individual participating in the study and the researcher will be able to identify the participant from the pseudonym. The dissertation chair will serve as an additional coder for data analysis purposes, but the chairperson will only know the pseudonyms of the participants. In addition, should participants reference non-participants, they will also be assigned a pseudonym. Quotes will be identified by pseudonyms when shared in the study.

The interviews will be recorded via Zoom and then transcribed. The participant has the right to review information on the recording. The recordings will be destroyed when transcription is complete. The transcriptions will be stored on a password-protected computer.

The records of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Any report published with the results of this study will not include information that could identify you. We will protect the confidentiality of the research data by securing all recordings and transcripts on a password-protected computer. Transcripts and quotations will be assigned a pseudonym which only the participant and researcher, Abi Van Regenmorter, will be able to identify.

It is possible that other people may need to see the information we collect about you. These people work for the University of South Dakota and other agencies as required by law or allowed by federal regulations.

Your Participation in this Study is Voluntary

It is totally up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop anytime. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research

The researcher conducting this study is Abi Van Regenmorter, under the supervision of Dr. Erin Lehmann. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please contact Abi Van Regenmorter at (605) 530-6156 during the day or Dr. Erin Lehmann at (605) 677-5437 during the day.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of South Dakota- Office of Human Subjects Protection at (605) 658-3743. You may

also call this number with problems, complaints, or concerns about the research. Please call this number if you cannot reach the research staff or you wish to talk with someone who is an informed individual who is independent of the research team.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. Keep this copy of this document for your records. If you have questions about the study later, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

Appendix C

Interview Protocol: The Art of Wearing Multiple Hats as a Dual-Role Administrator

Date of Interview:

Time of Interview:

Describe the project to the interviewee: The purpose of this comparative case study was to seek an understanding of dual-role school administrators.

Questions regarding consent: Did you read the consent form? Do you understand what this study is about? What questions do you have for me? Do you agree to be in this study? This interview will be recorded.

1. What is your job title?
2. How many hours per week do you spend as superintendent? As principal?
3. What is the most important responsibility of a dual-role leader?
4. How do you prioritize your responsibilities?
5. What is the advantage of serving as a dual-role administrator?
6. What are the challenges of a dual-role administration position and how do you handle these challenges?
7. In your opinion, what leadership skills/traits are needed for a dual-role administrator to be successful?

Directive leadership behavior includes helping group members accomplish goals by giving directions, establishing goals, setting timelines, and defining roles. Supportive leadership

behaviors include helping group members feel comfortable about themselves and their coworkers, two-way communication, asking for input, and showing social and emotional support to others.

8. Which leadership style would you say you embody and when?
 - a. Which leadership style do you use most often as a principal?
 - b. Which leadership style do you use most often as a superintendent?
9. Is there anything I should have asked you but did not?
10. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank the individual for participating in the interview. Assure the individual of the confidentiality of responses, as well as the opportunity to review the summary and analysis of the interview once it is complete.

Gender:

Age:

Position of Interviewee:

Years of Administrative Experience:

Years in Current Role:

Appendix D

Script for Verbal Consent to the Informed Consent Form

I am a University of South Dakota student conducting a research study about the experiences of dual-role school administrators in a Midwestern state. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. This means that you do not have to participate unless you want to.

The purpose of this research study is to understand the day-to-day operations of dual-role public school administrators in a Midwestern state. You will be asked to complete this interview about your role and experiences as a dual-role administrator. This should take about 45-60 minutes. You may choose to skip any questions that you prefer not to answer. To gain further information about your experience as a dual-role administrator, I will observe you during a routine workday for four hours. I will also review documents specific to your district regarding the dual-role administrative position. These documents may include Board of Education agendas, minutes, and job descriptions.

All the information I receive from your interview, including your name, school district, and other identifying information, will be confidential. Pseudonyms will be used. I will not identify you or use any information that would make it possible for you to be identified in the dissertation or any presentations about this study. All data will be kept on a password-protected computer.

The only risk to you might be if your identity were ever revealed. I will not even record your name with your responses, so this cannot occur. There are no other expected risks for participating in this research study. The benefit of participating is assisting in developing an improved understanding of the challenges and strengths of dual-role administrative positions for practitioners, school boards, and graduate schools.

Do you have any questions?

If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about this research project, do not hesitate to get in touch with Dr. Lehmann or me. Our contact information is provided on the informed consent form for you. All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Office of Human Subjects Protection at (605) 677-6184.

Do you agree with me using your quotes in the research using a pseudonym?

Do you agree to be recorded during the interview?

Do I have your permission to begin asking you interview questions?

Appendix E

Document Analysis

What is the topic of the document?

Who created the document?

When was the document created or last revised?

For whom was the document intended? What was the purpose of the document?

Appendix F

Observation Template

Date of Observation:

Location of Observation:

Time	Task	Notes