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Supporting School Transitions for Veteran Principals

by

Camille L. Loken

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education
in
Leading and Learning

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Supporting School Transitions for Veteran Principals

by

Camille L. Loken

This dissertation is completed as a partial requirement for the Doctor of Education (EdD) degree at the University of Portland in Portland, Oregon.

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Abstract

School principals are moved from one school to another because of retirements, resignations, or school divisions' rotation policies. Leadership transitions can be challenging for the principal and the school community given that the leaders have little to no knowledge of the new school, its culture, and its staff and no established relationships. Another challenge with principal turnover is its impact on student outcomes.

The main objective of this mixed-methods research study was to identify the factors that served to support transition success for veteran school principals. Using purposive sampling, a survey was completed by principals from a large urban school division ($N = 53$). There were three sections of the survey instrument: (1) the Leader Efficacy Questionnaire (LEQ) developed by Hannah and Avolio (2013), (2) questions on the principals' transition experience, and (3) questions about principals' professional learning experiences that supported them during the transition and also served to build their competence and confidence as principals. After the survey, using criterion sampling, semistructured interviews were conducted with eight school principals. The data were coded and grouped into three themes: (a) self-leading, (b) leading others, and (c) balcony view.

The findings of this research study suggest that peer support networks are essential components of support for principals. Given its importance, the creation of support systems should not be left completely up to the individual or to chance. Senior administrators need to consider ways of engaging principals in meaningful network

opportunities and providing one-to-one support. The findings also revealed ways that principals managed their school transitions successfully. The most prevalent factors included understanding the school's history, engaging in open and clear communication, being in service to the community, and leveraging staff strengths.

Keywords: [*self-efficacy, leadership transitions, leader efficacy, school principals*]

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Dedication

To all the school principals who work tirelessly every day in service to their students and school community.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout the history of modern schooling, research has demonstrated that leadership is integral to student success and achievement (Branch et al., 2013; Edmonds, 1979; Grissom et al., 2021; Louis et al., 2010). Effective leadership is pivotal to the success of any school. Creating excellent teaching and learning conditions within a school takes intentional, thoughtful, and responsive leadership. In short, leadership matters.

A decade ago, in the “Final Report of Research to the Wallace Foundation,” Louis et al. (2010) explored the relationship between improved student achievement and school leadership. The authors stated, “We have not found a single case of a school improving its student achievement record in the absence of talented leadership” (p. 9). Additionally, researchers Branch et al. (2013) concluded that effective principals improve student achievement, and ineffective principals lower achievement. Branch and co-researchers analyzed data from the first three years a principal leads a school and found a standard deviation of .21 of principal effects in math achievement. This standard deviation translates into an annual impact of +16 percentile points of student achievement by having an effective rather than an ineffective principal. Additionally, they measured principal effectiveness by comparing average student gains in the same school but under different principals and found a standard deviation of .11 principal effects in math achievement. This translates into +8 percentile points of student achievement (Branch et al., 2013).

In yet another study, Sackney (2007) examined the history of the Canadian school effectiveness and improvement movement over the span of 25 years. Throughout this history, it is clear that leadership is essential to improving schools. As Sackney stated, “Leadership is crucial in providing a sense of vision and purpose, moral integrity, coherence, and a culture necessary for improved teaching and learning to occur” (p. 179). Effective school leaders create the conditions for teachers to thrive and grow in their instructional practice, and students are the ultimate beneficiaries (Lyons, 2018). Additionally, principals’ self-efficacy and instructional leadership are significantly related and have the potential to impact student achievement and school improvement (Hallinger et al., 2018). In more recent research, in a report that the Wallace Foundation commissioned, Grissom et al. (2021) found that effective school principals have large effects on student achievement as well as important effects beyond student achievement, including reduced absenteeism and exclusionary discipline. Furthermore, the research showed clear links between effective leadership and improved teacher outcomes. To impact student outcomes positively, effective school leadership is a necessity.

The Complexity of Principal Leadership

Schools are complex systems and are becoming increasingly complex (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Drago-Severson, 2012; Grissom et al., 2021) and, therefore, more demanding for school leaders. In an endeavor to seek the perspectives of Canadian school principals on the complexities of leadership, the Alberta Teachers’ Association ([ATA] 2014), jointly with the Canadian Association of Principals (CAP), conducted a national research study. School-principal participants ($n = 500$) identified social, economic, or

political conditions that affected their leadership, including the growing diversity of the student population, changing family dynamics, teaching and learning conditions with external demands and accountability, rapidly changing technology, economic disparity in the school community, and shifting social values. Principals must navigate these complex conditions, all the while focusing on improving teacher practice and student learning (CAP, 2014).

Further complex conditions in public schools are that they have become more racially, economically, and learning needs diverse (Grissom et al., 2021). Grissom and co-researchers (2021) analyzed three decades of demographic trends in the United States of America to understand the environment in which principals work. The researchers found that public schools over the past three decades have been serving higher numbers of low-income students, English-language learners, and students with disabilities. Because of the changing landscape of public schools, school leadership is increasingly complex as a result of the demands that principals face when they support their students' different cultural, economic, and learning needs. Grissom et al. (2021) posited that the changing composition of public schools and the demands of students' different cultural, economic, and learning needs indicate that school principals need a more comprehensive set of skills and expertise than ever before. Given the demands of school leadership, principals would likely benefit from some guidance on how to successfully navigate the complexities of the schools they serve. Accordingly, many school jurisdictions provide leadership standards to help guide school leaders.

Principal Professional Development

The effectiveness of schools hinges on principals' ability to lead well. Knowing this, most education systems maintain quality education standards (e.g., National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015; Ontario Leadership Framework, 2013; Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2014). These competency standards serve as guides to the expected behaviors for effective leadership within schools and school jurisdictions (Lambert & Bouchamma, 2019). The Alberta Commission on Learning (2003) recommended the development of principal quality practice standards almost two decades ago in an effort to guide school leaders. The ATA (2014) released the first iteration of the standard as the Principal Quality Practice Guideline in 2009 and considered it a way to ensure that school leadership was excellent and focused. Over time, the Alberta government revised and renamed the standard the Leadership Quality Standard (LQS). In September 2019, Alberta Education updated the LQS to describe contemporary leadership competencies. The LQS "outlines the professional expectations that principals and school jurisdiction leaders must demonstrate to create the conditions under which teachers can do their best work" (para. 2). The LQS is a Ministerial Order, which makes leaders accountable to demonstrate they meet the standard to Alberta's Minister of Education.

To add to the accountability, leadership certification, like teacher certification, is now a requirement in Alberta. Effective September 1, 2019, Alberta's Education Act amendments required all Alberta principals to hold leadership certification. Principals who were active in their roles during the 2018-2019 school year were eligible to apply for

grandparented leadership certification. In the same year, all teachers in leadership positions were able to obtain leadership certification through an in-service program designed to align with the LQS. After September 1, 2019, teachers interested in obtaining leadership certification in Alberta are required to complete a formalized leadership program offered through Alberta's postsecondary institutions (ATA, 2018).

At the University of Alberta, the largest postsecondary institution in the province, two courses are required to meet the requirements for principal certification. The first course explores the foundational dimensions of the LQS, and the second promotes job-embedded learning to strengthen leadership competencies (University of Alberta, 2021). As the LQS states, "All leaders are expected to meet the Leadership Quality Standard throughout their careers" (p. 2); it highlights the importance of a consistent standard of professional practice (Alberta Education, 2019). Quality leadership standards support leadership development, professional growth, and the evaluation of school leaders (ATA, 2014).

School leadership, which is guided by clear leadership expectations, has contributed to Alberta's effective school system. Alberta was included as a high-performing education system in an international study in which researchers compared school leadership (Barber et al., 2010). One of their conclusions was that "leaders are grown through experience and support; actively cultivating them can increase the leadership capacity of the system" (p. 28). Moreover, Lambert and Bouchamma (2019) pointed out that competency standards, which are designed to guide professional learning and the assessment of school principals, need to be developed continually to ensure

students' academic success. Thus, the ongoing development of leadership competencies is essential. In recognition of this, educational systems offer ongoing professional development for leaders.

Principal Preparation

Given the importance of school leadership, many jurisdictions offer principal-preparation programs for leaders in preservice (those who are preparing to become leaders) and in-service (those who are already in leadership positions) to support the development of school principals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Grissom et al., 2019). This is true in the province of Alberta as well. As the College of Alberta School Superintendents (CASS, 2018) reported, the province offers many in-service leadership-development programs; of the 407 Alberta school authorities, 52 provided information about their programs for this report. In most jurisdictions, leadership development was mandatory, especially for new principals and new assistant principals (CASS, 2018). It is interesting that mandatory leadership development for veteran principals was relatively scarce. Therefore, to meet the leadership standards of their jurisdictions, principals independently need to seek opportunities, resources, and supports that best sustain their ongoing and changing learning needs.

Adapting Leadership to the School

Effective school leaders have an ongoing commitment to professional learning, especially given the rapidly changing world. Although leadership standards serve as guides, no manual or step-by-step action plan will ensure the leadership effectiveness of any school principal. Moreover, leaders need to be responsive to the school context and

culture. Hallinger's (2011) review of 40 years of empirical research on leadership revealed that, despite progress in school leadership, limitations linking leadership practice to different contexts exist. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' leadership approach. The research demonstrated that school leaders must adapt their leadership skills to the unique circumstances of their schools. In a meta-analysis, Waters et al. (2003) found a considerable relationship between leadership and student achievement. The data from a systematic meta-analysis of available studies, including doctoral dissertations, that examined the effects on student achievement reported since the early 1970s, demonstrated a substantial relationship between student achievement and leadership with an average effect size of .25. One of the principal's responsibilities with the greatest potential impact on student achievement is situation awareness, which they defined as "the extent to which the principal is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems" (p. 4). Waters et al. concluded that there is a vital need for efficacious and innovative leadership in our present-day school systems.

Given the uniqueness and complexity of schools, leaders need to be willing to grow continually in their leadership skills to meet the demands of their current contexts. Every school culture is different from that of other schools (Amtu et al., 2020), and not every school principal will be "lucky enough to come into a school culture that is a fully functioning and effective community" (Carbaugh et al., 2015, p. 119). Recent research has shown that effective school leaders seek to understand and respond accordingly to the different contextual demands they encounter (Leithwood et al., 2020). Fullan (2020)

cautioned leaders to “go slow to go fast” (p. 135). If leaders move too quickly, they might miss context that would be vital to their learning, which can hamper effective leadership of an organization. Fullan further asserted that when leaders move to a new job, they automatically become “deskilled” in relation to their new context. The leadership skills that worked in their previous school settings might not translate to new settings because so many variables are different (e.g., context, staff). Therefore, leaders must act as both experts and apprentices in new situations (Fullan, 2020). Schools have different contexts. Successful instructional leadership in one school cannot guarantee success in another because “what has taken years to hone in one school or district cannot be expected to have immediate success in another” (Trombly, 2014, p. 41). Leaders would benefit from listening to learn about their stakeholders’ values and contexts, appreciate the existing strengths, and then build from there (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017). Meeting the needs of teachers and students in the ever-changing educational landscape takes considerable leadership skills, along with a willingness to confront current realities and to view learning as a lifelong venture.

School Principal Transitions

The complexity of school leadership in the 21st century means that leaders must continually grow in their competencies to meet the demands of their current roles (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Hallinger, 2011; Manderscheid & Harrower, 2016). Furthermore, retirements, transfers, promotions, and school divisions’ rotation policies, along with other factors, ensure the inevitability of a change in the school principal. Researchers have shown that a change in principal can negatively impact student

achievement and overall school performance (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Pietsch et al., 2020). Mascall and Leithwood (2010) suggested that, for principals to impact their schools positively, they need to be in the position in their schools for about five years. However, principals do not always remain in schools for this length of time (Beckett, 2021; Béteille et al., 2012; Meyer et al., 2020). A change in leadership can be a demanding experience for all stakeholders involved, not least of whom is the principal (Bartanen et al., 2019; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Pietsch et al., 2020). It is clear in the literature that both inexperienced and veteran principals can be at a disadvantage during a leadership transition because they might have no knowledge of the school, its culture, or the staff or have any established relationships (Steele, 2015; Weinstein et al., 2009). Many school jurisdictions support those new to the role of principalship (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Grissom et al., 2019); however, this might not be the case with veteran principals. For example, it is interesting to note that the CASS (2018) report states that leadership development was often mandatory for new principals and new assistant principals. However, for veteran principals, leadership development was mandatory in only five jurisdictions; in those five, the meetings ranged from monthly to three times a year (CASS, 2018).

Given that researchers (e.g., Branch et al., 2013; Louis et al., 2010) have shown school leadership has a beneficial impact on student achievement, it is imperative all principals engage in ongoing professional learning in response to their current school contexts. Ineffective school principals or failed leadership transitions could ultimately impact the students whom the leaders are meant to serve. School divisions often provide

support to first- and second-year principals who are new to their schools with ongoing professional learning, and yet veteran principals are often left to their own devices and offered little to no support during school transitions, even though the transitions can be universally problematic. For these reasons, it is important to study veteran principals' professional learning opportunities, resources, and supports to identify the factors that facilitate ongoing professional growth and successful transitions. This area has received little attention in educational research.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to explore the self-perceived leader efficacy levels of veteran principals who had recently experienced a transition. For this study, veteran principals were defined as principals with more than two years of experience who had transitioned to their current schools within the last four years. Further, I explored the leadership actions, professional learning, resources, and supports that principals believed were the most helpful when they transitioned to their current schools. The following research questions guided this study:

1. As measured by the Leader Efficacy Questionnaire (Hannah & Avolio, 2013), what are the self-perceived leader efficacy levels of veteran principals who have recently experienced a school transition?
2. How, and to what extent, do self-perceived leader efficacy levels vary based on:
(a) years of principal experience, (b) number of school transitions in a leadership capacity, and (c) the principal's desire for the leadership transition?

3. What professional learning opportunities, resources/supports, and leadership actions do veteran principals perceive as the most impactful to their leader efficacy development and successful transitions?

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework provides an underlying structure or frame of a research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The two theories that informed this study and provided a perspective through which to examine principals' professional learning experiences and transitions were Bandura's (1988) social cognitive theory and Schlossberg's (1981) transition model.

Bandura maintained that "social cognitive theory explains psychosocial functioning in terms of triadic reciprocal causation" (Bandura, 1988, p. 276). In Bandura's model, environmental, behavioral, and personal factors interact with, and influence, each other. An individual's beliefs about their abilities, or self-efficacy beliefs, can impact the three factors and therefore their lives in several ways (p. 280). Bandura's social cognitive theory provides guidance on how to assist individuals develop the competencies that can enable them to strengthen both psychological and personal well-being.

Schlossberg's (1981) transition model also provides guidance to individuals. Schlossberg created the transition model to help adults understand and navigate transitions. In this model, Schlossberg (2011) identified four resources, referred to as the 4 Ss, which are common to all transition events: (a) situation, (b) self, (c) supports, and (d) strategies. According to this theory, every person will move through a transition

differently depending on the potential resources. Schlossberg's theory suggests that by strengthening their resources, individuals can better manage transitions.

Although the models that represent the two theories are distinct, they are related in that an individual's beliefs about their abilities are influenced by factors (Bandura) and resources (Schlossberg). The theoretical framework was used as a guide to consider the participants' perceptions of their transition and professional learning experiences.

Significance of the Study

Effective school principals positively impact teaching and learning in schools (Branch et al., 2013; Louis, 2010). Therefore, it is incumbent on principals to engage in ongoing professional learning to continue to build their leadership capacity. Furthermore, principals' school contexts can change throughout their careers. Change in school leadership is inevitable as principal vacancies open because of retirement, promotions, and other factors. Moreover, research has shown that principal turnover can have a negative impact on school performance (Bartanen et al., 2019; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Miller, 2013). Therefore, as Hallinger (2011) pointed out, school leaders need the capacity to figure out schools' unique environments and then adapt their leadership skills to meet the needs of the new contexts. Principals would do well to engage in professional learning to meet the needs of current and future schools.

The results from this study inform principals and school divisions on the most helpful leadership actions, professional learning, resources, and supports when principals make a school transition. Furthermore, the findings can assist principals and school organizations in determining the factors that support the development of high self-

efficacy and the likelihood of a smooth transition that may mitigate the effects of principal turnover.

Summary

School leadership requires leaders with the knowledge and skills to lead well in our complex world. We need leaders who are willing to grow continually in their leadership skills to meet the demands of their schools' unique and ever-changing contexts. Supporting the ongoing leadership growth of veteran school principals must be a priority for principals and school divisions, especially during times of transition. This study plays an important role in identifying the professional learning experiences that enhance leader efficacy of veteran school principals.

In Chapter 2, I review the literature on self-efficacy, the role of the school principal, the impact of principal turnover, leadership transitions, and principals' professional learning experiences. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology I used to conduct this explanatory mixed-method study. In Chapter 4, I describe the results of the data I collected by using a survey instrument, which consisted of the Leader Efficacy Questionnaire and a demographic/professional learning questionnaire, and conducting semistructured interviews. Finally, in Chapter 5, I present the conclusion, discussion, and implications of my research, along with a description of the study's limitations and suggested areas for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to explore the self-perceived leader efficacy levels of veteran principals who had recently experienced a transition. For this study, veteran principals were defined as principals with more than two years of experience who had transitioned to their current schools within the last four years. Further, I explored the leadership actions, professional learning, resources, and supports the principals believed were the most helpful to their transitions to other schools. I present this chapter in three sections and explore the literature on leaders' self-efficacy, the complexity of principalships, and transition experiences. First, I discuss the theoretical framework that draws on two theories, Bandura's (1988) social cognitive theory and Schlossberg's (1981) transition model, that provide lenses through which to examine principals' professional learning and transition experiences. Second, I present an overview of the complexity of principalships, especially during times of transition. Third, I consider professional learning avenues principals use to improve their leadership competencies. Finally, I summarize the chapter to highlight the effect of leaders' efficacy on effective school leadership.

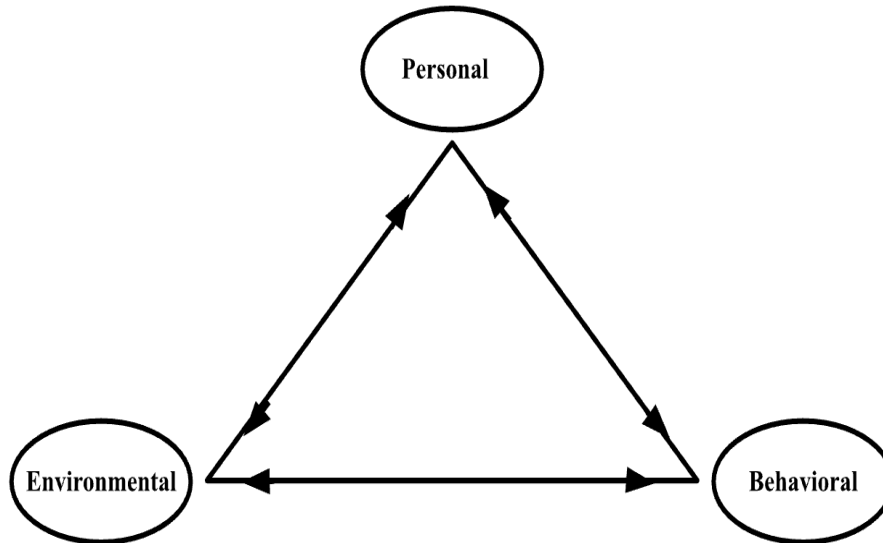
Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura (1997) described the concept of self-efficacy, a component of his social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1988), as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). Bandura (1997) suggested four sources of self-efficacy beliefs: (a) mastery experiences, (b) vicarious experiences, (c) verbal persuasion, and (d) physiological and affective states. Mastery

experiences can be positive or negative incidents that influence self-efficacy. Typically, a successful experience can increase self-efficacy, whereas an unsuccessful experience can lower it. Frequent successes can increase self-efficacy beliefs and mitigate the negative impact of occasional failures. Vicarious experiences provide information about how others might approach a given situation. These modelled behaviors can influence self-efficacy because they serve as examples, or nonexamples, that principals can integrate into practice. Verbal persuasion involves receiving feedback or praise on performance. Positive feedback, especially from a respected source, can increase self-efficacy. Finally, physiological and affective states involve attending to emotional arousal during stressful circumstances. If this somatic information is interpreted as dysfunctional, it could have a negative impact on self-efficacy. Conversely, effective coping skills enhance self-efficacy. Of the four sources, mastery experiences are the most influential of efficacy information “because they provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed (Bandura, 1997, p. 80). Bandura maintained that an individual’s self-efficacy beliefs are influenced by personal, environmental, and behavioral factors. This is referred to as the triadic reciprocal causation model where all factors “operate as interacting determinants that influence each other bidirectionally” (Bandura, 1988, p. 276). Figure 1 shows the three factors in the triadic reciprocal causation: Internal personal factors in the form of cognitive, affective and biological events; behavior factors; and external environmental factors (Bandura, 1997, p. 6).

Figure 1

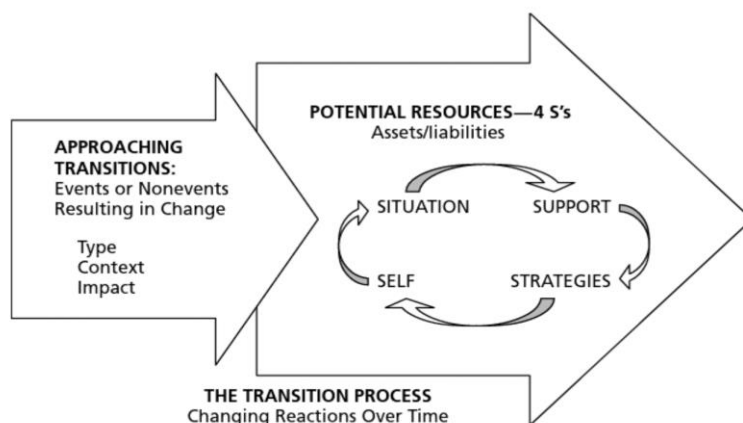
Bandura's Triadic Reciprocal Causation Model



Bandura (1988) maintained that personal factors can be developed to help improve self-efficacy and organizational functioning.

Schlossberg's Transition Model

Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory was developed to help individuals in a transition. Schlossberg defined transition as "any event or nonevent that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles" (p. 39) and can be viewed as a crisis or a development opportunity. Whatever the views of transitions, they can have unique challenges, and all require coping (Schlossberg et al., 2011). People in transition need to let go of their former roles and learn new roles that can involve gains as well as losses. Figure 2 depicts the 4 S system and identifies potential resources to help people cope with transitions. The 4 Ss include an individual's situation, self, support, and strategies.

Figure 2*Schlossberg's 4 S System*

(Schlossberg et al., 2011, p. 39)

As the first arrow of approaching transitions shows, it is important to consider the transition's type, context, and impact. The type of transition might be anticipated or unanticipated. The contextual factors can include gender, cultural background, or socioeconomics, and the impact can include the degree to which the transition alters relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles.

The second arrow shows the potential resources people can view as assets or liabilities. They can explore each of the 4 Ss to evaluate a transition and identify the assets or liabilities. Reflecting on these aspects helps individuals to assess their coping strategies and develop solutions to best support them in the transition. Table 1 defines each of the 4 Ss and presents reflective questions for individuals in transition

(Schlossberg et al., 2011).

Table 1*4 Ss and Reflective Questions*

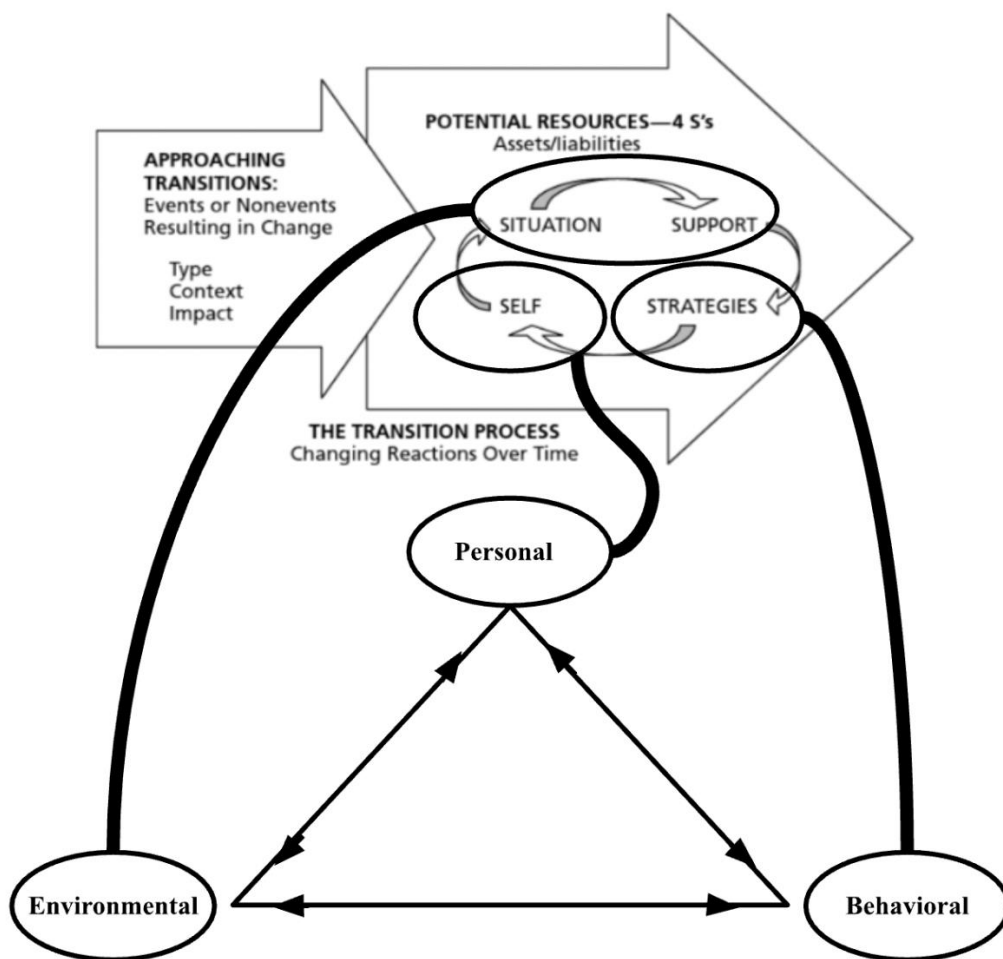
The 4 Ss	Questions to explore assets or liabilities
Situation: Every transition event or nonevent is different.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What triggered the transition? ● Was it at a good time in the individual's life? ● Did the individual initiate the transition or did it happen to him or her? ● Did the individual experience a role change? ● Has the individual had previous experience with similar transitions, and if so, were they helpful or harmful? ● Is the individual experiencing stress in other areas of life? ● Does the individual assess the transition as positive, negative, or benign? (pp. 72-73)
Self: Every person brings different assets to a transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Are they able to deal with the world in an autonomous way? ● Can they tolerate ambiguity? ● Are they optimists? ● Do they see the glass as half-full or half-empty? ● Do they blame themselves for what happens? ● Do they feel in control of their responses to the transition? ● Do they believe that their efforts will affect the outcome of a particular course of action? ● Do they have a sense of meaning and purpose? ● Do they have characteristics that contribute to resiliency? (p. 83)
Support: Social support can be the key to handling stress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is the person getting what he or she needs for this transition in terms of affect? Affirmation? Aid? ● Does this person have a range of types of support? ● Has the person's support system been interrupted by this transition? ● Does the person feel the support system for this transition is a low or a high resource? ● (p. 87)
Strategies: Coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the variables characterizing the particular situation in terms of timing, assessment, and duration? ● What are the personal and demographic characteristics of the individual at the time of the transition— the Self? ● What is the individual's level of ego development, personality, and outlook? ● What coping strategies does he or she use? What types of support does the individual have? What are his or her actual and perceived options? ● (p. 92)

Both Bandura and Schlossberg's theories maintain that factors, or resources, can be strengthened which may help to improve an individual's experience. Moreover, the

theories have similar aspects as depicted in the following figure. Figure 3 helps show the connections between Schlossberg's 4 Ss and Bandura's three factors.

Figure 3

Schlossberg's 4 S System and Bandura's Triadic Reciprocal Causation Model



The theoretical framework, consisting of the two theories, will be applied when I examine the transition experiences of veteran school principals.

Self-Efficacy and Leadership

Researchers have studied the development of self-efficacy in many fields, including leadership. McCormick (2001) offered suggestions to guide leadership research and defined *leadership self-efficacy* as “one’s self-perceived capability to perform the cognitive and behavioral functions necessary to regulate group process in relation to goal achievement” (p. 30). In other words, self-efficacy is leaders’ confidence in their ability to lead others successfully. Given Bandura’s (2009) position that the perception of efficaciousness impacts goal achievement more than actual skills or knowledge, it is important to look at the factors that support leader self-efficacy. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004), who developed the Principal Self-Efficacy Survey (PSES), stated that principals’ efficacy beliefs influence their daily effort and persistence at work as well as their resilience in dealing with obstacles. Further, because a sense of leader efficacy plays a significant role in meeting the demands and expectations of a principalship, they suggested that school divisions should recruit principals who believe that they can meet the challenges of the workplace. Furthermore, it is vital to find ways to enhance leader efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

Skaalvik’s (2020) research showed the impact of self-efficacy on school principals. Skaalvik explored the relationship between principals’ self-efficacy and several variables, including instructional leadership, emotional exhaustion, engagement, and the motivation to quit the work. Elementary and high school principals ($n = 340$) from randomly selected counties in Norway participated in the study. Skaalvik collected data using a questionnaire that included the Norwegian Self-Efficacy for Instructional

Leadership Scale, a version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2002), and questions to measure emotional exhaustion. The data analysis revealed high self-efficacy for instructional leadership results in lower levels of exhaustion, higher levels of engagement, and lower motivation to leave the principalship. The researcher posited that high levels of engagement and low levels of exhaustion increase principals' motivation to stay in their position. Conversely, low self-efficacy can result in higher levels of exhaustion and lower levels of engagement, which could decrease principals' motivation to stay in their positions. Thus, Skaalvik concluded it is important to consider factors that could increase engagement and limit emotional exhaustion in the principal's role.

In another study on principals' self-efficacy, Hesbol (2019) found principals must be highly efficacious to be able to motivate others to perform at high levels. PK–12 school principals ($n = 778$) from a midwestern state in the United States of America participated in the study. Hesbol used the PSES and the Learning Organization Inventory. The PSES assesses principals' perceptions of efficacy for moral leadership, instructional leadership, and management. The Learning Organization Inventory captures principals' perceptions of the presence of learning organization behaviors and attitudes in schools. Hesbol found higher self-efficacy in principals who perceived the school environment as changeable and adaptable. Additionally, higher principal self-efficacy can be associated with a collaborative school culture and shared vision. Principals must be highly efficacious to devote themselves to efforts to improve student outcomes. The researcher

concluded principals need networks of support and communication within both the school and district levels to achieve their goals (Hesbol, 2019).

In yet another study, Dwyer (2019) reviewed approximately 25 years of research on leadership self-efficacy to explore the role of self-efficacy in the leadership of organizations. In a review of the literature, Dwyer found compelling evidence that leadership self-efficacy has a positive impact on leaders' effectiveness. However, Dwyer also noted overconfidence in leadership ability could lead to complacency and low motivation to develop leadership skills. Additionally, high self-efficacy can result in high expectations for followers that might not be attainable. Also, high leadership self-efficacy can lead to inadvisable risk taking. Nonetheless, leaders with high self-efficacy are beneficial to their organizations, and it is important to consider ways of developing high self-efficacy. Dwyer noted leadership-development programs could increase leadership self-efficacy. Some suggestions for the development of efficacy include executive coaching and mentoring, cognitive modelling techniques, and training in constructive thought patterns (Dwyer, 2019).

Researchers have suggested higher self-efficacy in principals can improve leaders' effectiveness. As I discussed previously, research has also shown school leadership has a beneficial impact on student achievement (Branch et al., 2013; Grissom et al., 2021). To grow as an effective principal requires ongoing professional learning. Although formal professional learning and development are required for new principals in many jurisdictions, this might not be true for veteran principals (CASS, 2018). Furthermore, research has shown a change in principal can negatively impact the school

(Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Pietsch et al., 2020). For this reason, it is important to study veteran principals' leadership actions, professional learning, resources, and supports to identify the factors that facilitate a smooth school transition and the development of high self-efficacy. In the following sections, I review the literature on the complexity of the principalship, especially during times of transition, as well as professional learning avenues principals use to improve their leadership competencies and enhance their leader efficacy.

School Principals in Canada

Canada is a country with 10 provinces and three territories without a ministry or department of education at the federal level. Under the Canadian Constitution, provincial governments are responsible for all levels of education and govern democratically elected school boards. School boards have the autonomy to administer annual budgets, hire staff, and set local board policies. Teachers who work in public-education schools are considered civil servants in the public service of Canada. All Canadian teachers require a bachelor's degree in education and a provincial certificate to teach (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2021). Local school boards employ teachers, and if they have continuing contracts, they remain in force from year to year (ATA, 2021). School principals are employed on a continuing-contract basis, and succession usually results from transfers, retirements, resignations, or school divisions' rotation policies. This is unlike chief executive officers (CEOs) in private industry, where the poor performance of an outgoing CEO or a desire to improve the business's growth generally precede succession (Schepker et al., 2017). Principals with continuing contracts in the public

education sector have relatively high job security. Despite this benefit, similarly to CEO positions in the private sector, school leadership positions have ever-increasing job demands that can lead to job dissatisfaction.

Increasing Demands

As Grissom et al. (2021) established, the current role of school principals is complex and requires a comprehensive set of skills and expertise. The 21st century, with the impact of globalization, emerging technologies, and changing workplaces, requires that leaders in all sectors continually grow in their knowledge and skills to meet present-day demands. In the education sector, the view that school principals must be both managers and instructional leaders has been common for some time. These two roles are not isolated but, rather, interconnected. Principals cannot be good instructional leaders without also being good managers (Morthy, 1992).

Across Canada, principals have comparable job expectations. In a meta-synthesis study, Pollock and Hauseman (2016) synthesized Canadian research on school principals in the 21st century. They found Canadian principals have similar tasks and roles across the country, with overlapping duties in both leadership and management and an emphasis on leadership first and management second. Within the leadership realm, the duties include supervising instructional programs; hiring, supervising and evaluating all staff groups; providing professional development for staff; guiding student achievement and student progress; creating positive school climates; and maintaining connections with all stakeholders. On the management side, principals' duties include disciplining students; focusing on student attendance; reporting student progress; attending to students' well-

being, health, and safety; scheduling; budgeting; maintaining student records; creating school plans; requisitioning supplies; and maintaining the upkeep of the school and its property. Given this list of tasks and roles, it should not come as a surprise that Canada, along with other nations, has a growing trend of principal shortages, which diminish the desirability of the school-principal position, as well as a need for succession planning (Pollock & Hauseman, 2016). The demands of the school-principal position have resulted in waning levels of job satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction

In a study in which they used a mixed-methods approach, Wang et al. (2018) used an online survey to collect data from Ontario public school principals ($N = 1,423$). The questionnaire focused on relevant issues that affect principals, such as the use of time, accountability, well-being, and job satisfaction. The results show increased work demands significantly impact principals' job satisfaction. Wang et al. found excessive workload and emotional exhaustion can lessen job satisfaction; 73% of the surveyed principals reported they often/always fall behind in their work, and 80% reported their work often/always puts them in emotionally draining situations. As Bandura's (1988) social cognitive theory with regard to self-efficacy shows, feelings of failure can undermine self-efficacy.

Systemic dimensions in schools can impact principals' self-efficacy beliefs. It is clear from the research that the ever-changing demands of principalships can lead to job dissatisfaction. In a national research study (CAP, 2014), researchers examined the current literature on changes in principals' work and considered only Canadian empirical

studies since 2000. The findings reveal that the principals were dissatisfied in a number of ways. For example, the principals indicated dissatisfaction with the number of curriculum changes and other initiatives that came their way without enough time to plan appropriately. Budgetary cuts were another area of concern. The principals reported their financial resources were inadequate to meet their schools' educational needs. As well, some principals noted parents' demands and expectations of school and the difficulty of satisfying parents and the community as sources of dissatisfaction. An increased workload was also a problem, and the principals expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of time they needed to spend on the job (CAP, 2014). Job dissatisfaction depends on principals' values, disposition, and goals (Henne & Locke, 1985) and can motivate them to move to other schools or leave the profession.

Principal Turnover

Schools can benefit when principals remain in their position for several years. Mascall and Leithwood (2010) suggested for principals to have a positive impact on their schools, they need to remain in them for about five years. However, principals do not always remain in their schools for this length of time. Meyer et al. (2020) collected administrative data from Colorado, Missouri, and South Dakota in the United States of America to discover the percentage of school leaders who remained at their schools (stayers), transferred to other schools (movers), or left the position (leavers). They found approximately 80% of the school leaders stayed in the same school after one year, and approximately 54% remained in the same school after three years. Meyer et al. also examined the principals' characteristics associated with the likelihood of being movers or

leavers rather than stayers. With regard to the movers, the findings show the younger principals (< 52 years old), principals who identify as racial/ethnic minorities, and principals with lower salaries were more likely to move after three years. Additionally, the principals in schools identified for improvement, in lower-performing districts, and in districts with higher enrolment were more likely to move after three years. The leavers in this study were principals who were aged 52 or older, who earned lower salaries, and who identified as racial/ethnic minorities. Furthermore, the principals in schools with lower teacher salaries, in schools in smaller districts, and in schools identified for improvement were more likely to leave after three years.

Retaining principals in their current schools can be challenging. In another study on principal turnover, Beckett (2021) explored principals' retention rates over a five-year span. She analyzed data from schools in an urban school district in Colorado to identify the number of principals the schools had had during a five-year period. The findings indicate principal turnover, on average, occurred every two and a half years. Only 24% of the principals stayed at their schools for a five-year period, and 76% left their schools in the same time span. Schools, where principals stayed for five years, had a lower percentage of students of color, free and reduced lunches, English-language learners, and students with disabilities. These schools also had more gifted and talented students. The principals who left within five years were in schools with a higher percentage of students of color and free and reduced lunches. Davis and Anderson (2020) tracked the movement of new principals ($N = 1,113$) in the state of Texas over the course of five years following their appointments. The data show the majority of the principals (50%) turned over after

two years. Furthermore, 26% of the first-time principals exited the public school system altogether within five years.

These studies have similar findings to those of earlier studies. Béteille et al. (2012) analyzed data from the Miami-Dade County Public Schools district, the largest public school district in Florida and the fourth largest in the United States of America. The researchers showed that 22% of principals leave their current schools each year and most transfer to other district schools. The evidence suggests principals who transfer tend to move to schools with fewer lower-achieving students. In another study, Miller (2013) analyzed administrative data from the North Carolina Education Research Data Center over the span of 12 years. The data show principal turnover was common in that more than half of the principals left their schools in less than five years, and, over the 12 years, on average, three different principals led the schools. To summarize, despite data suggesting that a tenure of five years is optimal, principals, especially those in lower-performing schools, do not remain in their schools for that length of time.

The Impact of Principal Turnover

Research has suggested a change in school principals can have negative impacts on both teachers and students. Given the principal's importance to a school's performance, ensuring successful principal turnover is important (Zepeda et al., 2012). Principal turnover is defined as any instance in which one principal leaves the school and another takes over the school principalship (Pietsch et al., 2020). Mascall and Leithwood (2010) examined the consequences of rapid principal turnover in the United States. Teachers and principals from 80 schools completed surveys and answered questions

about average principal turnover rates; the effects on school culture, curriculum, and instruction; and student achievement. Mascall and Leithwood collected data on student achievement from state websites to yield results on state-mandated language and mathematics tests. The results suggest principal turnover has significant negative effects on student achievement. However, given the accountability climate prevalent in the United States during the time of the study, the researchers noted that a degree of caution is required with regard to the link between principal turnover and student outcomes. Because of the high accountability system, low student achievement can lead to frequent principal turnover.

Miller (2013) articulated this same caution when investigating how student performance fluctuates with principal turnover. Miller noted principal turnover is a common phenomenon in the United States, especially in low-performing schools, schools with high poverty, and schools with more minority and English-language learners. Miller examined 12 years of administrative data from North Carolina public schools that had experienced principal transitions and found the student scores were substantially lower in schools with new principals. Furthermore, students in schools with two or more principal transitions had lower test scores on average than those in schools with one or no principal transitions. However, the results might be misleading because principal turnover often occurs after a period of declining achievement at a school. Nonetheless, the impact on student achievement is concerning.

Bartanen et al. (2019) used longitudinal administrative data from Missouri and Tennessee in the United States of America to study the effect of principal turnover on

school performance, specifically on student achievement. On average, their results demonstrate principal turnover negatively affects school performance in that student achievement is lower in math and reading and teacher turnover rates are higher. Pietsch et al. (2020) examined the German education system, where principals, unlike their colleagues in the United States of America, work in a low-accountability context and their positions are relatively secure. The researchers used data from classroom observations as well as teacher and school surveys from primary schools ($N = 101$) in Hamburg, Germany. The evidence shows principal turnover tends to be less disruptive in Germany than in the United States of America; however, the social composition of the school made a difference in the results in that principal turnover more negatively impacted less privileged schools (Pietsch et al., 2020). Considering the impact of a change in school principal, it is important to support principal transitions.

Managing Leadership Transitions

Challenges are inherent in any leadership transition, regardless of the industry. In both the business and education sectors, leadership transitions occur. In the market-driven business world, researchers are strongly motivated to study the factors that help or hinder successful CEO transitions. Consequently, the study of CEO succession has a long history in management research. In business, school principals would be considered CEOs given that school principals are similar to executives with expertise in instruction, operations, and finance (Doyle & Locke, 2014). A review of this literature offers the education sector proven ideas and theories to mitigate the challenges of leadership transitions.

CEO successions are significant turning points for organizations. As Berns and Klarner (2017) pointed out in their review of the literature on CEO succession, leadership successions temporarily cause internal disruptions and at the same time create opportunities for future direction. Although a change in leadership can be refreshing, it can also prove difficult for both the leader and the members of the organization (Goodyear & Golden, 2008). Manderscheid and Harrower (2016) highlighted that “leader transitions can be fraught with challenges as new leaders try to adapt to a new culture, team, and work processes. At no time during their career are leaders more vulnerable to failure as when they are in transition” (p. 390). In fact, the failure of a CEO can be fairly costly to a business organization, with the most immediate impact on the company’s market capitalization. Additionally, when a CEO fails, the new leader often receives the blame (Conger & Nadler, 2004). Because newly appointed CEOs are often vulnerable to challenges from inside and outside the organization, it is important to examine how they manage the leadership transition period (Yi et al., 2020).

Managing leadership transitions takes intentional actions. One way to manage a leadership transition period is to use a protocol called *leader assimilation*, which is “a planned leadership development intervention used to help leaders accelerate their adaptation to a new organization and their new team” (Manderscheid, 2008, p. 686). A member of the organization’s human resources department facilitates the leader-assimilation protocol. The protocol involves the new leader and the team during one 6-hour timeframe in preparing the leader, soliciting feedback from the team without the leader present, receiving feedback from the facilitator and coaching the new leader, and

having a leader-led dialogue. Manderscheid (2008) used a multiple case study research method to determine the effectiveness of this leadership-assimilation protocol. All three cases involved experienced leaders in transition. The findings indicate that facilitating leader assimilation increases leaders' learning, adaptation, and relationship building within the organization. Moreover, the leaders reported that the protocol helped them to learn about the team's culture and expectations.

In another study, Manderscheid and Harrower (2016) explored leader transition and polarity. They defined *polarity* as "a state where two ideas or tendencies are in opposition, thus creating tensions that are not fully solvable" (p. 391). Although the leadership problems might be easily solvable, a single solution cannot resolve the polarity (Manderscheid & Harrower, 2016). In other words, polarity describes the complexities inherent in leadership. It encompasses both/and thinking, in which people hold two opposing views simultaneously, and enables a synthesis of the two ideas (Boss, 2010).

Manderscheid and Harrower (2016) pointed to the need for both/and polarity thinking to optimize successful transitions. In their qualitative study, the researchers collected data through semistructured interviews with leaders ($N = 10$) transitioning into new leadership roles. The leaders were in higher education, banking, consulting, and healthcare industries. Several polarities emerged, along with suggestions on how to best navigate these challenges. The polarities included driving change (making things happen) and maintaining the status quo (the way things are), work and family responsibilities, tradition (relying on old ways of doing things) and innovation (when a situation demands new and innovative ways of doing), action (organizational goals) and reflection (learning

about the organization and self), tasks (getting things done), and relationship building. The findings suggest five primary ways leaders can manage polarities: collaborating, learning, developing talent, self-reflecting, and making decisions.

The leaders in Manderscheid and Harrower's (2016) study stressed the importance of collaborating with others as a primary way to manage polarities. They identified listening, communicating, seeking to understand, and asking questions as critical skills for collaboration. One leader explained that he spent the first year "asking a lot of questions, doing a lot of listening and not doing any setting of strategic vision or direction or making any pronouncements" (p. 402). Furthermore, the leaders reported that they set goals not for personal gain but to serve the growth of their employees and the organization.

Another suggested way to manage polarities during a transition is through learning (Manderscheid & Harrower, 2016). The leaders in this study recognized the need to learn about the organization's history and to continue to grow as leaders themselves as they guided the organization. The transitioning leaders believed that they needed to show respect for the history and legacy of the organization and not change things simply for change's sake.

The suggestion to develop talent involved building relationships, delegating tasks, trusting in employees' abilities to complete the tasks, identifying and developing competencies in others, and self-reflecting to increase self-awareness (Manderscheid & Harrower, 2016). The leaders identified personal missions as core components of their leadership. Self-reflection ensured alignment with their beliefs and values as they guided

their organizations. The final primary way that the leaders suggested to manage polarities is decision making. They weighed decisions, did not rush to action, and were clear that fast change was not the best way to approach a new organization. Leaders must first gain credibility with their employees before they move to action.

Although those in the business world have much to learn about leadership succession, it might not be generalizable to the public sector of education. Motivated by the deficit in educational-research literature, Zepeda et al. (2010) examined principal succession planning from a system perspective. They suggested that, although the findings on succession planning in the business sector can be applied to school systems, principal succession in public schools might require a different approach from business organizations and might need to be individualized to the needs of school systems. Further research has illuminated the practices and procedures of school-principal succession planning.

The Succession of School Principals

A change in principals is inevitable in every school. Research has suggested that principal turnover can have negative consequences on school performance, which makes it essential to understand how best to support the succession of school principals. To that end, Weinstein et al. (2009) conducted a mixed-methods study to explore how a change in school principal can affect school success and to examine leadership structures that assist schools during principal transition periods. In their quantitative study, they analyzed school performance with a sample of 80 New York City high schools. From the data, Weinstein et al. identified 13 schools that had experienced changes in school

principals that enhanced, maintained, or decreased school performance. Of the 13 school principals, they invited four to participate in interviews. All four principals were new to principalship and to the schools. They all acknowledged the difficulty of navigating a new school culture. Additionally, the principals all reported that they had few formal support structures and had to create support systems for themselves. Predominately, they forged these support systems through informal means that involved developing personal relationships, networking, and sharing experiences. The relationships offered both moral and technical support and were critical in assisting the leaders through difficult transition periods. Weinstein et al. suggested ways to make the transition period smoother for school principals, including maintaining an ongoing supportive connection with a principal colleague and working with the outgoing principal. Their prevalent recommendations were that schools and school systems carefully plan in advance for principal succession and heed “the importance of adequately preparing and supporting principals in their new schools, regardless of whether the principal is a novice principal new to that school, or an experienced insider” (p. 2).

In a multiple-case study in which Steele (2015) explored the succession experiences of school principals, she collected data from 10 principals from three neighboring urban school districts in the southern United States of America. She interviewed principals at each school level (elementary, middle, junior high, and high school) within each district to gather their perceptions of succession planning. The range of experience of the principals was 1 to 6 years. Steele found that during the transition period, the principals felt overwhelmed with their job responsibilities, including

long workdays, changing accountability measures, a lack of support by the community and the district” (p. 202). The principals also reported the benefits of mentor relationships and identified specific supports of value, including building relationships with staff members, practicing distributive leadership, spending time becoming acclimatized to the school culture, and having district support. Steele noted that the schools did not have formalized succession plans to support the incoming principals, and she recommended that schools create transparent and formal succession plans to support transitioning leadership in the district and that these succession plans articulate the schools’ needs and provide support to principals both before they assume new roles and during their tenure in the schools.

In a cross-comparative study, Ritchie (2021) analyzed interview data to examine the transition experiences of school principals ($N = 9$) from academies in England and independent and charter schools in the United States of America. The principals had at least two years of experience but had been in their current positions for less than five years, which enabled them to recall their transition experiences. The principals used various approaches to transitioning to their new schools, including building relationships and learning about the school climate, adapting their leadership styles, leading congruently with their values, listening and learning about the culture, and developing self-awareness. Ritchie posited that principals must be intentional in their personal process during the transition; and, to be effective, each principal has “to address his personal transition and establish a new identity in an unfamiliar environment and culture” (p. 14).

A report reissued from the New Teacher Center (Jensen, 2014) highlighted the problem of *churn*, which refers to situations in which schools lose many experienced principals every year. The report suggests that school principals need ongoing professional development and support to maintain and foster a sustained commitment to their schools. The researcher encouraged district staff to consider four recommendations to help principals remain in their positions: Invest in ongoing professional development, engage principals in meaningful network opportunities, provide one-to-one support, and restructure central-office roles and policies. The researcher asserted that principals require ongoing professional development beyond the first couple of years on the job and advised districts to invest in developing the skills of principals and offer ongoing support in the complex work of leading schools. The report pointed to research that showed that peer networking builds leader capacity. Engaging in networking enables principals to enhance their professional competencies collectively. One-to-one support through coaching and mentoring can increase principals' retention. The central role of a principal supervisor tasked with leading one-to-one coaching and principal peer networks can also improve principals' retention and effectiveness as leaders.

According to Potts (2016), a leader's transition into a new role is often shortchanged and yet, leaders need a clear plan to transition successfully. The suggested strategic plan included setting goals, developing a transition plan, assessing the organization, sharing the findings, and then stepping into action. To stay on track in a transition, Potts suggested the leader needs to stay in the learning mode to gain knowledge before making decisions; have open lines of communication; understand the

organization's culture before making changes; match what they say with what they do; remain open to new approaches; adjust leadership approaches to the new situation; and, develop a clear plan.

Ensuring a smooth leadership transition and lessening principal turnover requires the planning and preparation of both the organization and the incoming leader (Potts, 2016; Ritchie, 2021). Transitioning school principals to new settings means a change for both the leaders and the organizations. Furthermore, when principals move into new schools, the context will differ from that of the schools they left (Brauckmann et al., 2020; Thuściak-Deliowska et al., 2017), and leaders must adapt their leadership to the current setting.

Context Matters

Zaccaro and Klimoski (2002) suggested that adjusting leadership skills to a new context is beneficial. As leaders move into new schools, they would be well-served to adjust to the new situations and consider what they need to do for effective performance. With the idea that context and leadership are intricately connected, Brauckmann et al. (2020) critically examined context-sensitive school leadership in principal-preparation programs. The findings suggest that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is not preferable; rather, principals benefit from preparation designed to meet their specific needs and unique leadership assignments (Brauckmann et al., 2020).

Hallinger (2018) also analyzed the diversity of contexts for school leaders. His analysis, framed as a conceptual rather than an empirical contribution, identified several contexts for leadership practice, including institutional, community, national, cultural,

economic, political, and school improvement contexts. In discussing the implications of these diverse contexts, Hallinger suggested that, for school leaders to optimize their leadership practices for specific schools, they must consider the myriad layers of context and consider their own personal leadership assets. Leading in unique school contexts is equal parts art and science.

In another study, Thuściak-Deliowska et al. (2017) examined distinct school cultures and posited that every school has a unique culture and climate that impacts its participants. These researchers studied two schools with similar characteristics (e.g., student and educator demographics, government support, etc.) but diametrically different student-achievement results. The findings show significant differences in the principals' behaviors with regard to leadership style. Further, the results show that principals' behaviors and collaborative school cultures are connected.

The research (Brauckmann et al., 2020; Hallinger, 2018; Thuściak-Deliowska et al., 2017) suggested that what works in one school cannot be expected to work equally well in another without specific adaptations to the new school setting.

Responsive Leadership

The role of school principalship is multifaceted. School principals must develop skills to lead change effectively (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Fullan, 2005; Louis et al., 2010). Also, they must be able to adapt their leadership skills to a new setting (Hallinger, 2011; Trombly, 2014; Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2002). Furthermore, leadership transitions can be laden with challenges (Manderscheid & Harrower, 2016). In addition, the school principal role is complex with ever-growing demands (Grissom et al., 2021;

Moorthy, 1992; Pollock and Hauseman, 2016). For example, a new demand that both teachers and leaders must meet is the transition to 21st-century learning. Across Canada, ministries of education are updating curricula to incorporate 21st-century competencies. In Alberta, for example, the Ministerial Order on Student Learning (Alberta Education, 2013) states that the fundamental goal in education is to “inspire all students to achieve success and fulfillment and reach their full potential by developing the competencies of Engaged Thinkers and Ethical Citizens with an Entrepreneurial Spirit, who contribute to a strong and prosperous economy and society” (p. 2). To prepare students for the future adequately, a focus on creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration is essential. Consequently, this challenges teachers to grow their professional practices to support 21st-century learners appropriately. Furthermore, leadership is key to improved teacher practice.

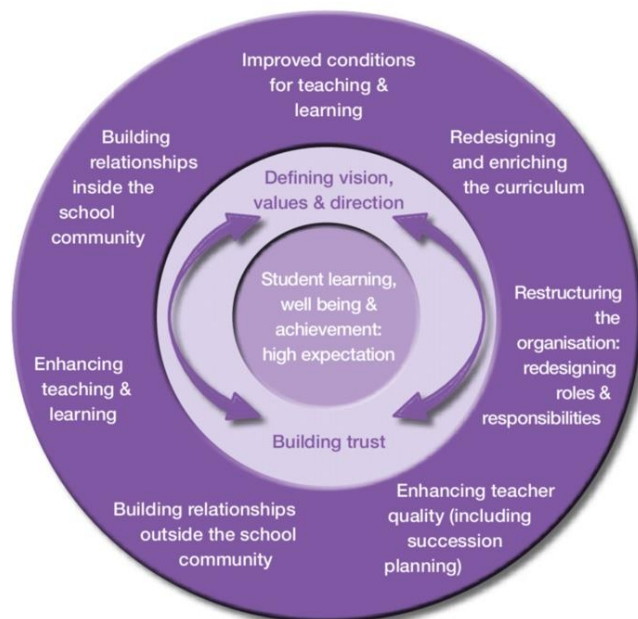
Research has indicated that school principals impact teachers’ practice. Ismail et al. (2018) examined the relationship between school leaders’ instructional leadership and teachers’ functional competency and used a quantitative approach to measure the correlation between the two variables. They selected a sample of teachers ($n = 225$) from 12 schools in northern Malaysia. Their findings showed that school leaders’ instructional leadership practice increased teachers’ functional competency, their success in classroom instruction, and students’ academic achievement (Ismail et al., 2018). Accordingly, effective leaders must be responsive to the complexity of their unique schools to improve and meet the learning needs of both teachers and students.

Day et al. (2020) reviewed effective leadership and presented new evidence on successful school leadership. The research showed that leadership has an important impact on school organization, culture, and staff. Leadership directly impacts teachers and their work which then impacts student outcomes. Furthermore, leadership strategies that are values-driven and context-sensitive are more likely to lead to success. Day et al. noted that school leaders have a pivotal role in setting the school's direction and creating and sustaining favorable school culture. The research identified several key dimensions of successful school leadership illustrated in the following graphic.

According to the research, the eight interrelated dimensions shown in Figure 4 are vital to successful school leadership. The dimensions illustrate schools' dynamic and complex characteristics (Day et al., 2020).

Figure 4

Dimensions of Successful School Leadership



(Day et al., 2020, p. 26)

The complexity of schools and school leadership requires the ability to maintain perspective. Heifetz and Linsky (2017) stated that leaders must get perspective while amid the action. To achieve perspective and an understanding of the bigger picture, leaders need to “move back and forth from the balcony to the dance floor” (p. 92). This metaphor helps to describe leaders taking themselves out of the action or “dance” to distance themselves on the “balcony” to get a clearer picture of reality. This is an iterative process which involves moving back and forth from action to reflection (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017). Given the complexity of leadership, a balcony view can serve to provide principals with a broader understanding of teaching and learning in their schools.

How Principals Improve Their Practice

School leaders would do well to enhance and maintain their professional practice in the service of teaching and learning. Given that effective school principals have a positive impact on student achievement (Grissom et al., 2021; Louis et al., 2010; Sackney, 2007), ongoing professional learning is important. Accordingly, leadership-standard documents often require career-long learning (Lambert & Bouchamma, 2019). As an illustration, LQS #2, Modeling Commitment to Professional Learning, is one of the standards in Alberta Education’s LQS document (Alberta Education, 2019). To meet this competency, the LQS suggests indicators such as engaging with others, actively seeking feedback and information, critically reviewing and applying educational research, and building a shared understanding of current educational trends and priorities (Alberta Education, 2019). To assist school leaders in their professional growth, the ATA (2022) developed a self-reflection tool to help leaders to reflect on their knowledge, skills, and

attributes in their professional practice as they relate to the LQS. The essential question for LQS #2 is, “How do I engage in career-long professional learning and ongoing critical reflection to identify opportunities to improve school leadership, teaching, and learning?” The ATA (2022) offered many suggestions on how leaders can meet the standard, including actively seeking feedback from various sources to enhance leadership practice and participating in collaboration and shared inquiry with peers.

As studies have indicated (e.g., Tingle et al., 2019; Zepeda et al., 2014), principals appreciate collaborative, community-oriented, job-embedded, self-directed, and peer-supported professional learning. In a report on leadership development, Breakspear et al. (2017) noted that to develop leadership competencies adequately so that they impact leaders’ professional practice, “the leadership development needs to be embedded (happening within the context of work); personal (owned and driven by the leader while impacting on mindsets and identity); and continuous (so there is no end to leadership growth)” (p. ix). Additionally, leaders must take time to step back and engage in ongoing reflection to improve their practice (Breakspear et al., 2017).

Given that the success of the school depends on the effectiveness of the school principal, it is vital that school principals continuously develop their leadership competencies in the service of teacher and student learning. Many principals turn to networking, mentoring, and coaching to engage in learning that has the qualities that the aforementioned studies and reports highlighted.

Networking

Some principals use networks to develop their leadership competencies. In the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, Incorporated (n.d.) defined *network* as “a usually informally interconnected group or association of persons, such as friends or professional colleagues” (definition 5). Networks connect principals to others in educational fields where learning from each other occurs. Leithwood and Azah (2016) maintained that leadership networks can build the capacity of their members by revealing the practices and ideas of other principals who face similar leadership challenges. These researchers set out to inquire into effective school leadership networks and how they contribute to the professional development of school leaders. Leithwood and Azah limited their study to networks that the school districts and not the school leaders themselves organized. They analyzed survey data provided by school and district leaders in Ontario, Canada ($n = 450$). Their results suggest that, according to the respondents’ opinions, participating in leadership networks is a robust source of professional learning, second only to individual reading. They concluded that networks are a key strategy for school leadership development (Leithwood & Azah, 2016). Consequently, networks benefit principals in their quest for ongoing learning. However, further research on networks that school leaders themselves organize might reveal additional impacts.

Another way for principals to engage in networks is through social media. Trust et al. (2018) explored the impact of professional learning networks on social media platforms. They used a convenience sample via an online anonymous survey to collect qualitative data from PK–12 instructional leaders ($n = 400$) from 21 countries. Overall,

their data analysis revealed that the professional learning networks met the instructional leaders' needs and interests. Because they connected with others outside their local contexts, the leaders discovered and developed new ideas and perspectives. Given the demands of a leader's role, social media networks are convenient and responsive to emergent needs. The respondents believed that professional learning networks supported their professional growth in numerous ways (Trust et al., 2018). However, the researchers questioned whether there might have been undue influence from popular social media thinkers. Thus, principals would profit from checking sources and investigating whether educational research supports these popular ideas. To sum up, networks are an avenue of learning that supports the leadership and professional growth of school principals.

Mentoring

The manual from Ontario's Ministry of Education (2010) defines *mentoring* as "non-evaluative relationships maintained over time between a newer and a more experienced professional, and [it] is often offered to an individual who is new to a position. The focus is on the professional learning needs of the mentee" (p. 15). Accordingly, the mentoring relationship is self-directed and job embedded. Certainly, many researchers have agreed that mentoring has many positive effects on new and aspiring principals (Aravena, 2019; Bickmore & Davenport, 2019; Clayton et al., 2013). According to the ATA (2010), mentoring encourages engagement in professional dialogue, promotes access to ongoing feedback and support, increases leaders' knowledge and skills, and preserves time for ongoing reflection on leadership practices.

These benefits apply not only to first-year principals but also to experienced school principals.

Recently, Tingle et al. (2019) examined professional development activities that principals found effective. From a sample of non-novice principals ($n = 59$) in a large urban school district in the southwestern United States of America, the researchers administered a survey to collect data. They constructed the survey to determine the impact of mentor support, as well as other factors, on the effectiveness of school leaders. Their findings show that principals find it helpful to have a mentor. Mentors provided them with a safe space to have conversations about their schools, and they welcomed advice from more experienced colleagues. The respondents noted that the mentors helped them to develop as school leaders (Tingle et al., 2019). Hence, this peer-supported professional learning experience benefits principals' professional growth.

Benefits to Mentors. As I have already noted, mentoring positively impacts mentees. Research has shown that not only mentees, but also mentors benefit from these relationships (Aravena, 2018; Bickmore & Davenport, 2019). Bickmore and Davenport (2019) examined the benefits of experienced principals as mentors and found that principal mentors benefit both personally and professionally. The researchers engaged in an embedded case study over the course of two years with principals ($n = 11$) who had a range of 5-12 years of experience. They collected data in group interviews and from the mentors' self-reflections and wrote fieldnotes on the conversation. The mentor principals reported the considerable ways in which they benefited from mentoring another, including deeper self-reflection and introspections that led to changes in practice and

exposure to new ideas, time preserved for reflection, growth in their listening and questioning skills, an opportunity to examine their context with fresh eyes and with appreciation, and increased confidence and sense of purpose (Bickmore & Davenport, 2019). On the whole, mentoring is mutually beneficial.

In another study on mentoring, Aravena (2018) found similar outcomes regarding the mentor relationship. In this study from Chile, the researcher used a qualitative approach based on interpretative phenomena. The mentors were veteran principals ($n = 8$) who were specifically trained in mentoring. Once the training was complete, they met with their mentees eight times over the course of four months. Aravena collected data on the mentors' experiences from reflection sheets ($n = 280$) that the mentors completed after each visit. The data revealed that the professional strategies that the mentors learned included active listening, reflective questioning, observing, providing effective feedback, and developing effective relationships. Ostensibly, the mentoring relationship is reciprocal in nature and has a positive impact on leadership growth.

Coaching

Although mentoring and coaching often go hand in hand, they are different from each other. Mentors provide intraprofessional support that contributes to the development of new leaders (Duncan & Stock, 2010). Mentors provide advice over a period of time to younger or less experienced colleagues. The International Coaching Federation (2020), a nonprofit organization dedicated to professional coaching, defined *coaching* as “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential” (para. 5). Various studies on

coaching (e.g., Lackritz et al., 2019; Nicolaidou et al., 2018; Patti et al., 2012) have shown that it is a collaborative partnership between coaches and willing individuals that can help leaders with goal setting and specific action. Coaching is a valued approach to supporting professional growth and development in school leaders. Thus, leaders interested in moving practice into action might want to consider working with coaches.

Many researchers have explored coaching as an avenue to support school leaders' leadership and professional growth (e.g., Lackritz et al., 2019; Patti et al., 2012). Effective coaches help leaders to create awareness, clarity, and understanding of personal or professional issues to accelerate leaders' progress toward goals (International Coaching Federation, 2020). Patti et al.'s (2012) findings show that effective professional development occurs when leaders engage in reflective practices that enrich self-awareness. The teachers and administrative leaders in this study engaged in personal, and professional coaching to explore the gaps between existing and ideal leadership behaviors. Over four years, school administrators, principals, and assistant principals ($n=24$) received coaching in 25 New York City public schools. Patti et al. gathered data in a series of interviews and found that personal, and professional coaching has several benefits, including improved performance, better conflict management, enhanced relationships, and the use of more collaborative leadership strategies. Certainly, these outcomes strengthen the leadership competencies of school principals.

Lackritz et al. (2019) also studied the impact of leadership coaching. They used selective sampling to recruit non-novice school principals ($n = 8$) from New York City and Washington, D.C., and interviews, as well as related documents and artifacts, to

collect data. The results indicate that coaching has an impact on principals' leadership development in several areas, including communication, organization, instructional leadership, and the management of staff. The findings also reveal issues that constrain leadership development, including frustration with coaches' workstyle, persistent lateness, or general disorganization that frustrates principals (Lackritz et al., 2019). For these reasons, a good fit with coaches is important to the success of the coaching relationship. However, overall, coaching has many benefits for school principals' leadership growth.

Summary

The research showed a strong correlation between successful schools and effective school leadership. Effective school leadership requires an ongoing commitment to professional learning, especially given the rapidly changing world. In the service of student learning, principals must strive to improve what they do and grow their competencies in every context in which they find themselves. Learning leaders are critical to improving the quality and equity of education within their schools and school systems. Given that leader transitions can be especially challenging as new leaders adapt to new school cultures, they must be willing to learn how to navigate transitions successfully. Professional learning and transition strategies will enhance leader efficacy and have a positive impact on leader effectiveness.

In the following chapter, I present a detailed description of the methodology I used to examine leadership transitions and leader efficacy development in veteran school principals.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss the methodology I used to conduct this explanatory sequential mixed-method study to investigate leadership transitions and leader efficacy development in veteran school principals. This chapter includes sections on the study's purpose, research questions, rationale, participants, and specific design and procedure, including instrumentation, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, my positionality as a researcher, trustworthiness issues, and limitations.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to explore the self-perceived leader efficacy levels of veteran principals who recently experienced transitions. For this study, veteran principals were defined as principals with more than two years of experience who had transitioned to their current schools within the last four years. Further, I explored the leadership actions, professional learning, resources, and supports principals believed were the most helpful in their transitions to their current schools. The following research questions guided this study:

1. As measured by the Leader Efficacy Questionnaire (Hannah & Avolio, 2013), what are the self-perceived leader efficacy levels of veteran principals who have recently experienced a school transition?
2. How, and to what extent, do self-perceived leader efficacy levels vary based on:
(a) years of principal experience, (b) number of school transitions in a leadership capacity, and (c) the principal's desire for the leadership transition?

3. What professional learning opportunities, resources/supports, and leadership actions do veteran principals perceive as the most impactful to their leader efficacy development and successful transitions?

Rationale for the Methodology

I chose an explanatory sequential mixed-methods study design to use the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a deeper understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data for this study were collected in two phases with the first phase collecting quantitative data followed by qualitative data. This mixed-methods design is often referred to as an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, or two-phase model, as it first collects quantitative data and then qualitative data to further elaborate on the quantitative results. The reason for choosing this approach is that the quantitative data often provides only a broad understanding of the research problem. Therefore, more analysis through qualitative data collection is needed to extend the general quantitative picture. There are several advantages to this two-phase design. One advantage is this design has clearly defined quantitative and qualitative parts to it which is helpful to the researcher when designing and carrying out the research. It also leverages the best of both quantitative and qualitative data by first acquiring quantitative results from a population and then refining or elaborating on these results through a deeper qualitative exploration in the second step. A challenge with this research design is that it is labor-intensive, and the researcher needs expertise and time to sequentially collect both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

During Phase 1 of this study, I administered a survey to all participants to collect quantitative data. The survey included questions from the Leader Efficacy Questionnaire ([LEQ] Hannah & Avolio, 2013) and questions to collect information on demographics and professional learning experiences. The LEQ is a self-report measure that researchers use to assess leaders' perceptions of their level of confidence in their capabilities. I compared the results of the LEQ to the participants' demographic information and professional learning experiences. At the end of the survey, I gave the participants an opportunity to volunteer to provide more in-depth information during the second phase of the study. During Phase 2, the volunteers could choose to participate in a short interview, either in person or on Google Meet. If the participants chose to meet in person, I held one meeting with each participant at locations convenient to them.

Survey Participants

I used a purposive sampling strategy to invite veteran school principals to participate in this research. Purposive sampling is a strategy in which researchers choose particular people to provide relevant information the researcher could not obtain otherwise (Maxwell, 2012). Purposive sampling includes several strategies, such as criterion sampling (Patton, 2014). The specific criteria for eligible participants in this study were veteran principals with more than two years of experience who had transitioned to their current schools within the last four years. I chose the timeframe of four years with the belief that it was a period of time within which the participants could still remember and discuss the transition experience.

I gained access to potential participants in a large urban school division in Alberta that has over 200 schools, with 58% elementary, 18% elementary/junior high, 12% junior high, 7% senior high, 2% elementary/junior/senior high, and 2% junior/senior high schools at the time of this investigation. The total student enrolment is just over 105,000. As a member of this school division, I had easy access to the participants. The division's Research Department Unit first contacted potential participants to request their participation in the survey portion of this study, and I then contacted those individuals directly. In total, 72 participants met the criteria of more than two years of principal experience and transfers between 2018 and 2021. The total number of study participants was $N = 53$, which was a participation rate of 73.6%. Of these participants, 47% served in an elementary school, 11% in elementary/junior high, 19% in junior high, 11% in senior high, 4% in elementary/junior/senior high, and 8% in junior/senior high schools.

Interview Participants

At the end of the survey, the participants had the option of volunteering to provide more in-depth information by participating in interviews. The total number of volunteers was $N = 39$, which was 74% of the survey participants. I used criterion sampling to select interview participants who met the predetermined criterion (Patton, 2014) of overall LEQ scores and purposefully selected participants from a group of low, moderate, and high LEQ scores. Participants were chosen based on their self-efficacy scores to best represent the data set. Table 2 shows the range and frequency of the total LEQ scores. I categorized the participants in the 64-74 range as having low LEQ scores, those in the range of 75-86 as having moderate scores, and the participants in the 87-98 range as having high scores.

Table 2*Total LEQ Scores of Potential Interview Participants*

Range	Frequency	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
		81.97	7.36
0 - 63	0		
64 - 74	8		
75 - 86	23		
87 - 100	8		

Note. n =39

The lowest LEQ score was 64, and the highest was 98. The next research decision was to determine the sample size for the interviews. Qualitative research experts have no straightforward answer to the question of how many to include in a sample size (Vasileiou et al., 2018). To choose a sample size large enough to provide an in-depth picture of the phenomenon and still make it manageable within the constraints of the dissertation timelines, I decided to interview eight people: two from the low range, four from the moderate range, and two from the high range. To represent the larger sample size of the urban school division which has 58% designated as elementary schools, I decided that the majority of participants would come from elementary schools. Table 3 shows the potential interview participants' current school settings. I used a random name picker from classtools.net to choose participants from each of the LEQ ranges. Once I had filled the quota from elementary schools, I no longer chose names from the elementary pool. In total, there were 4 participants from elementary schools that were interviewed, representing 50% of the interview participants.

Table 3*Current School of Potential Interview Participants*

Current school	<i>n</i>	Percent
Elementary	19	49
Elem/jr. high	3	8
Junior high	9	23
Senior high	5	13
Elem/jr./sr.	2	5
Jr./sr. high	1	2

Note. *n* = 39

Instrumentation

The survey instrument in the quantitative phase of this study consisted of three sections. The first section of the survey contained a series of questions on leader efficacy that Hannah and Avolio (2013) had developed. The next section asked questions about principals' transition experience. The final questions asked about principals' professional learning experiences that supported them during the transition. The survey also included questions to collect demographic information.

In the qualitative phase of the study, I conducted semistructured interviews using questions that I created. The interview protocol included a total of four questions which included one question on leadership actions/behaviors, resources/supports, barriers/challenges, and the management of polarities during a school transition (see Appendix D).

Leader Efficacy Questionnaire Survey

Researchers have validated the LEQ (Hannah & Avolio, 2013) across diverse study samples. Hannah et al. (2012) demonstrated the construct validity of the Leader Self and Means Efficacy and tested its relationship with outcomes over five studies and five diverse samples. According to the researchers, leader efficacy is a central factor that propels leaders' developmental readiness. Therefore, organizations can use the LEQ as an indicator of developmental readiness.

Empirical research on the LEQ has validated three components, which include leader action self-efficacy (LAE), leader self-regulation efficacy (LSRE), and leader means efficacy (LME), which Table 4 defines. The LEQ is designed to collect leaders' perceptions of self-efficacy, which is the confidence leaders have in their ability to lead. The survey also captures leaders' beliefs about the extent their peers, superiors, resources, and other means within their environment support their leadership (Hannah & Avolio, 2013).

Hannah and Avolio (2013) defined the three components of the LEQ, which include both leader self and means efficacy, as "leaders' beliefs in their perceived capabilities to organize the psychological capabilities, motivation, means, collective resources, and courses of action required to attain effective, sustainable performance across their leadership roles, demands, and contexts" (p. 2). The LEQ has 22 questions, each ranked on a scale from 1 to 10, from *Not at all confident* to *Totally confident*. The LAE portion has seven questions, the LSRE has eight questions, and the LME has seven questions. The survey takes 5 to 10 minutes to complete.

Table 4*LEQ Components, Descriptions, and Sample Items*

Component	Description	Sample Item
Leader action self-efficacy	Leaders' perceived capability to effectively execute various critical leader actions, such as motivating, coaching and inspiring followers, and getting followers to identify with the organization and its goals and vision (Hannah & Avolio, 2013, p. 2).	As a leader, I can energize my followers to achieve their best.
Leader means efficacy	Leaders' perceptions that they can draw upon others in their work environment (peers, senior leaders, followers) to enhance their leadership and that the organization's policies and resources can be leveraged to impact their leadership (Hannah & Avolio, 2013, p. 2).	As a leader, I can rely on my organization to provide the resources that I need to be effective.
Leader self-regulation efficacy	Leaders' perceived capability to (a) think through complex leadership situations, interpret their followers and the context, and generate novel and effective solutions to leadership problems; coupled with (b) the ability to motivate oneself to enact those solutions using effective leadership with followers (Hannah & Avolio, 2013, p. 2).	As a leader, I can determine what leadership style each situation requires.

I obtained permission to administer the copyrighted LEQ instrument from Mind Garden Inc. (Hannah & Avolio, 2013), with an agreement not to include the entire instrument in any published material (Appendix A). I could include only three sample items; the organization specifies the samples (see Table 4). I also obtained permission for remote online use of the survey instrument (Appendix B).

The organization also granted permission to alter some terms within the instrument (Appendix C). Specifically, I changed the term *followers* to *staff* to accommodate the prevalent distributed leadership paradigm in present-day schools where leadership is distributed amongst the staff members (Harris, 2012). The term *followers* connotes the outdated idea of a principal in an exclusive leadership role. I also altered *rewards and punishments* to *incentives and sanctions* to align more with the school division's terminology. I made no other word changes or alterations.

Demographic and Professional Learning Experiences Survey

I developed the other parts of the survey to collect demographic information and information on transition and professional learning experiences. I limited the demographic portion of the survey to four questions: years of experience, number of schools, year of transition, and degree level (see Table 5) as these variables were relevant to my study. I chose not to include common demographic questions such as age, gender, or cultural background because exploring these variables were not within the scope of my study. In total, the survey included 16 questions: seven multiple-choice questions, four checkbox questions, two Likert-scale questions, and three short-answer questions.

Piloting the Survey. Piloting a survey is an important consideration for a researcher. As Van Teijlingen and Hundley (2002) pointed out, piloting allows the researcher to determine whether the proposed instrument is inappropriate or too complicated. Therefore, I engaged in an iterative process wherein I tested and improved the instrument based on the feedback I received. First, I field-tested the instrument with three hand-selected school principals who were not involved in the study and had recent

school transitions. I asked them to provide feedback on the quality of the questions in connection with the research topic. Next, doctoral candidate students enrolled in a graduate course at the University of Portland reviewed the instrument. I asked them to provide feedback on the functionality of the survey, including word choice, the design and flow of the questions, and the appropriateness of the questions. Then four assistant principals who had recently experienced transitions pilot-tested the survey to help me to conduct a statistical analysis (e.g., descriptives, frequencies, correlations, ANOVA) and determine the validity of the survey instrument. Finally, a research assistant I hired used Qualtrics to build the survey and provided feedback on the wording and placement of questions. I then refined the survey questions based on all the feedback that I received (see Table 5).

Table 5*Survey Questions and Response Type*

Survey questions	Response type
1. What year did you transition to your current school? (2021, 2020, 2019, 2018)	Multiple choice
2. What is your current school? (Elementary, Elementary/Junior High, Junior High, Senior High, Elementary/Junior/Senior High, Junior/Senior High)	Multiple choice
3. What was your prior school? (Elementary, Elementary/Junior High, Junior High, Senior High, Elementary/Junior/Senior High, Junior/Senior High)	Multiple choice
4. When you transitioned to your school, was the transition (To the school you requested, To a different school than you requested and acceptable to you, To a different school than you requested and unwelcomed by you, Requested by the division and acceptable to you, Requested by the division and unwelcomed by you, Other)	Multiple choice & open-ended (Other)
5. Which Formal Learning opportunities supported you during your transition? Check all that apply. (Conferences, Division PL sessions, Web-based training, Workshops, University, Other)	Checkboxes & open- ended (Other)
6. Which Experiential Learning opportunities supported you during your transition? Check all that apply. (Hands-on experiences, Job shadowing, Projects, Trying things out, Other)	Checkboxes & open- ended (Other)
7. Which Coaching and Mentoring opportunities supported you during your transition? Check all that apply. (Mentor/Mentee, Connect with a consultant, Coaching, Other)	Checkboxes & open- ended (Other)
8. Which Peer-to-Peer Learning opportunities supported you during your transition? Check all that apply.	Checkboxes & open- ended (Other)
9. On a scale of 1 (least) to 5 (most), how impactful were each of the learning opportunities in helping to support you during the transition to your new school? (Formal Learning, Experiential Learning, Coaching and Mentoring, Peer-to- Peer Learning)	Likert scale
10. Thinking about the most impactful learning opportunities you identified above, please share your thoughts about why they were impactful to you.	Short answer
11. On a scale from 1 (not successful) to 10 (very successful), how would you rate your transition?	Likert scale
12. Why did you give that rating?	Short answer
13. What professional learning opportunities, resources, and/or supports might have helped to improve the rating of your transition experience?	Short answer
14. Not including this current school year, how many years have you served as a school principal? (1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, More than 20)	Multiple choice
15. Including your current school, at how many schools have you been a principal? (2, 3, 4, 5 or more)	Multiple choice
16. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, Doctoral Degree, Other advanced degree)	Multiple choice

Interviews

In the second phase of the study, I interviewed a subgroup of the participants from the first phase of the study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that semistructured interviews are a mix of more- and less-structured interview questions. A semistructured approach enables researchers to be responsive to whatever emerges during the interviews. Thus, even if the questions are predetermined and standardized, researchers can use clarifying or probing questions in semistructured interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I asked four predetermined questions to further explore the participants' school-transition experiences. The questions primarily focused on the participants' experiences, behaviors, and opinions. They received the questions one day before the interviews so that they could begin to think about their responses. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) stated that it is important to have a means to structure the interview and to take notes. To create a structure for the interviews, I followed Creswell and Creswell's (2018) interview protocol (Table 6).

Table 6*Interview Protocol*

Step	Description	Information/questions
1. Basic information about the interview	Record the time and date, where the interview took place, and the names of the interviewee and interviewer. Note the length of the interview and file name of the digital copy, audio recording and transcription.	N/A
2. Introduction	Interviewer introduces herself and shares the purpose of the study. The general structure of the interview is explained. Before beginning, the interviewee is asked if they have any questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As you know, this study aims to learn more about leadership efficacy development in school principals and school transitions. • Do you have any questions about the interview process, collection of your data, or timeframe for withdrawing from the study? I have your signed consent form; do I have your verbal consent to proceed with this recorded interview?
3. Opening question	The interviewer starts with an ice-breaker question to help put the interviewee at ease.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you begin by briefly describing your principalships to date, including your current school?
4. Content questions	These are the researchers' sub-questions in the study, phrased in a way that is friendly to the interviewee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four questions (Appendix D)
5. Using probes	Probes ask for more information or an explanation of ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me more about . . . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please explain what you mean. • Can you give me an example?
6. Closing instructions	Thank the interviewee and respond to any questions they may have. Assure the interviewee about the confidentiality of the interview.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As we wrap up this interview, what else would be important for me to know about leadership efficacy and school transitions? • Thank you for participating in this interview. As you know, this interview is completely confidential. I will send you a written transcript and my interview notes, and you will be able to withdraw any or all of the data. You will have the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the data collected and provide any feedback.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Once the Institutional Review Board at the University of Portland approved the proposal (Appendix E), I submitted it to the school division for approval, and the school division granted it on August 31, 2022 (Appendix F). In early October 2022, a division's research team member emailed eligible participants and attached the division's approval letter (Appendix G). I received the participant list shortly thereafter, and on October 6, 2022, I emailed all eligible participants a general introduction to the study and a request for their participation in the survey (Appendix H). I embedded the consent form in the survey itself (Appendix I). On October 15, 2022, I sent a reminder email to all of the participants (Appendix J); and on October 21, 2022, I emailed a final request to participate in the study (Appendix K). The survey was open from October 6 to October 24, 2022, and took 20 to 25 minutes to complete.

At the end of the survey, I asked the participants whether they were willing to engage in a semistructured interview. On November 15, 2022, I sent an email to participants who indicated interest (Appendix L) to invite them to participate in the second phase of the study. I attached a document to the email with detailed information on the research and a consent form (Appendix M). The semistructured interviews took place from November 21 to December 12, 2022, at a time and location that were convenient to the participants. The interviews were 30 to 40 minutes in length, which were recorded and later transcribed. I wrote brief notes during the interviews and my reflections immediately following the interviews to capture any insights (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Following the interviews, I gave the participants the written transcripts and a summary of my interview notes and offered them an opportunity to verify the accuracy of the data and withdraw or redact any or all their comments.

Data Analysis

This study began with a survey, and in the second phase, the focus was on collecting and analyzing qualitative data from semistructured interviews to further elaborate on the quantitative survey data. Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained that the mixed-method approach enables researchers to collect diverse types of data to gain a more complete understanding of the research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data alone offer. Table 7 is an overview of the data-analysis process for each research question.

Table 7*Overview of Data Analysis*

Research Question	Analysis
RQ 1 - As measured by the Leader Efficacy Questionnaire (Hannah & Avolio, 2013), what are the self-perceived leader efficacy levels of veteran principals who have recently experienced a school transition?	LEQ instructions - average the scores across the items on the scale (LAE, LME, LSRE) Three scales can be combined into an overall construct Repeated measures ANOVA Correlations
RQ 2 - How, and to what extent, do self-perceived leader efficacy levels vary based on: (a) years of principal experience; (b) number of school transitions in a leadership capacity; and, (c) the principal's desire for the leadership transition?	Descriptives and frequencies One-way ANOVA
RQ 3 - What professional learning opportunities, resources/supports, and leadership actions do veteran principals perceive as most impactful to their leader efficacy development and successful transitions?	Descriptives and frequencies Repeated measures ANOVA Correlations First and second coding cycle

Quantitative Data Analysis

The survey had two parts: the LEQ and the demographic/professional learning questionnaire. The scoring instruction for the LEQ is to average the scores across the items on the scale. Researchers can use the three scales (LAE, LME, LSRE) as three separate constructs or combine them into an overall higher-order construct (Hannah & Avolio, 2013). In the demographic/professional learning questionnaire, I transformed

string variables into numeric variables to allow a detailed analysis of each participant's responses (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

I used IBM SPSS software to analyze the quantitative data and followed Creswell and Guetterman's (2019) suggestions. The first step was to use descriptive statistics to describe trends in the data, which indicated general tendencies in the data (mean, median, and mode), as well as the variability of scores (variance, standard deviation, and range). Next, I calculated the inferential statistics (e.g., descriptives, frequencies, one-way ANOVA) to reach conclusions on the associations among the variables. (e.g., Does self-efficacy relate to years of experience as a principal?).

Qualitative Data Analysis

I collected qualitative data from the short-answer questions in Phase 1 as well as from the semistructured interviews in Phase 2. Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommended similar steps to analyze qualitative data. To find answers to the research questions, I followed their suggested step-by-step processes. Additionally, I chose to hand-analyze the data, rather than use a software program, to provide me with a visual and tangible connection to the data codes.

The first step was reading to get a general sense of the collected data and jotting down notes, observations, and questions in the margins. This preliminary jotting was a helpful way to capture ideas for later analytic consideration (Saldaña, 2016). In this initial reading, consideration of the general ideas, the tone of the ideas, and my impression of the depth and credibility of the information helped to guide my thinking (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Next, I read the data again to identify content related to the research

questions. On the third reading, the open-coding process began. Saldaña (2016) defined a *code* as “a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 4). The qualitative analytic process is cyclical, and Saldaña divided the coding methods into two cycles. The first cycle occurs during the initial coding of the data.

In the first cycle of coding, I used In Vivo coding, which Saldaña (2016) recommended for beginning qualitative researchers who want to honor their participants’ voices. In Vivo coding uses the direct words or phrases of the participants as codes rather than the researcher’s generated words. During the In Vivo coding, I organized the data by grouping chunks and writing words or phrases, and I used the participants’ language to represent that piece of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This process effectively splits the data into individually coded segments and prepares them for the second coding cycle. Also, in preparation for the second coding cycle, I subsumed several similar In Vivo codes to the same descriptive code (Saldaña, 2016). For example, “high flyers” and “shiny stars” became “go to people.” In the second coding cycle, I used axial coding. Axial coding is a method that involves strategically reassembling the data that are split during the first coding cycle. In this step, I sorted and relabeled the initial codes into conceptual categories (Saldaña, 2016).

For each interview transcript, I grouped the codes that were related to each other and created a new category if a code did not yet align with the others. In my analysis of the subsequent interviews, I compared the categories to previous categories that had emerged. This iterative process enabled me to eliminate redundancy and build evidence

for categories (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). During this process, some first cycle codes were eliminated if they came up only once or did not fit with the categories. These codes were declared outliers. I also kept the number of categories manageable. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) posited that fewer categories mean a higher level of abstraction, which helps to communicate the findings more easily.

The final step in the analysis process was to reduce the categories into final themes and follow the suggested guidelines of “criteria for categories, themes, and findings” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 213). The criteria must answer the research questions and be

1. exhaustive (enough categories to encompass all relevant data),
2. mutually exclusive (a relevant unit of data can be placed in only one category),
3. as sensitive to the data as possible, and
4. conceptually congruent (all categories are at the same level of abstraction).

Throughout the entire coding process, I stopped to write analytic memos to capture my thoughts (Glaser, 1965) and my reflections on the coding process or analysis of the data. Saldaña (2016) recommended that when anything related to and significant about the coding process comes to mind, researchers should immediately write memos on it. These memos helped me to gain a deeper understanding and explanation of the data (Saldaña, 2016). The process also surfaced any preconceptions or biases that I held.

Ethical Considerations

I followed high ethical standards in conducting the research for this study. Before I began the data collection, the Institutional Review Board and the school division in which I conducted this study granted approval. I sent all of the participants a description of the research project and gave them an opportunity to ask any clarifying questions before they participated. I also gave each survey participant a consent form during the preamble to the survey. The consent form clearly outlined that their participation in the study was voluntary and their decision to participate or not would not affect their relationship with the school division. Further, the form indicated that the participants were free to withdraw their consent and discontinue their participation at any time without penalty. Before I gave them access to the survey questions, the participants had to indicate their agreement to participate. The survey portion of the study was confidential and did not collect identifying information such as name, email address, or school name. I asked only those interested in participating in the second phase of the study, the semistructured interviews, to leave their contact information. I kept all of the data that I collected confidential and stored them on a password-protected computer.

In Phase 2 of the study, I gave the interview participants a consent form. Before we engaged in the interview, I obtained both written and verbal consent from them. I assigned pseudonyms to the interview participants and stored the audio recordings of the interviews in password-protected computer files. In addition, I omitted any data that could reveal the identity of the interview participants from the final report. Finally, I

destroyed all of the data after I defended the dissertation: I shredded the paper data and erased the digital data.

Positionality of the Researcher

As a veteran principal who has experienced two school transitions, I was aware of the need to bracket any potential preconceptions and biases. My lived experience of serving in the school principal role has likely resulted in opinions and attitudes toward the topics that I studied in this research project. Thus, I used bracketing methods throughout the research process.

Clarifying biases that researchers bring to their studies creates an open and honest narrative. Furthermore, researchers need to comment on how their backgrounds might influence their interpretations of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As Fiarman (2016) pointed out, a growing body of research has shown that we all have unconscious biases and that we must continually deconstruct them to identify our deep-rooted beliefs to limit their influence on us (Fiarman, 2016). Researchers' values and lived experiences cannot be separated from the research process. Thus, it is important that researchers acknowledge, describe, and bracket their beliefs and values (Ponterotto, 2005).

Bracketing is a method they use "to mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the research and thereby to increase the rigor of the project" (Tufford & Newman, 2012, p. 81). It involves a multilayered process of self-discovery throughout the research study and a commitment to surfacing researchers' preconceptions and biases throughout the research process (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Issues of Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of a research project, clarifying the researcher's bias is essential. Tufford and Newman (2012) described multiple ways of bracketing that researchers can use. Qualitative researchers need to consider the type of bracketing that is appropriate for themselves and their research. Some ways of bracketing, which are not mutually exclusive, include memoing and journaling to capture the researcher's preconceptions throughout the research process.

Memoing involves writing memos throughout the data collection and analysis, which enables researchers to examine and reflect on their engagement with the data. Writing memos can lead to important insights, including the need to acknowledge their preconceptions. In journaling, researchers write reflections throughout the research process. Reflective journals strengthen their ability to maintain a reflexive stance (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Furthermore, as Creswell and Creswell (2018) pointed out, self-reflection can clarify the biases they bring to their studies. In journaling, researchers can comment on how their backgrounds (e.g., gender, culture, socioeconomic status) influence their interpretations of the data.

The need to bracket was in my mind throughout the research process, and I engaged in memoing and reflective journaling to enhance the study's trustworthiness. Additionally, I maintained a stance of curiosity rather than knowing by consistently being open-minded to new learning.

In considering issues of trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba (1986) queried how researchers' values and realities might play a role in their studies. They questioned

whether different researchers who engage in similar studies might arrive at completely different conclusions and recommendations if they have different sets of values. Actually, the nature of reality affirms that no single reality exists during an inquiry, but rather multiple realities that researchers socially construct. Thus, to establish trustworthiness and authenticity, researchers would be well-served to consider credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability when they engage in qualitative studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

Credibility

To establish credibility for this study, I triangulated the data, which involved examining the evidence from both the quantitative and qualitative phases to coherently justify the themes that emerged from the data. Also, the use of peer debriefing strengthened the accuracy of the narrative. Peer debriefing requires that researchers find individuals who are willing to review their qualitative studies, ask questions, and provide feedback. Another way to establish credibility is to present disconfirming evidence or conflicting information on the themes that emerge from the findings. Finally, I used member checking to establish the accuracy of the qualitative findings. This involved asking the participants to consider the major findings or themes that emerged from the interviews and comment on them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this study, I conducted data triangulation through peer debriefing, the presentation of discrepant information, and member checking.

Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1986) recommended that researchers collect thick, descriptive data to ensure the transferability of the findings and prove that they have external validity. Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommended that they write descriptions so rich that the reader feels part of the experience. Further, when researchers write comprehensive descriptions of the settings and offer several viewpoints on the themes, the results become more realistic and richer. To establish transferability in this study, I used rich, thick descriptions to communicate the findings and enable others to determine the feasibility of transferring the findings to their contexts.

Dependability and Confirmability

I established dependability and confirmability in this research study through a detailed audit trail. I outlined my decisions during the data collection, analysis, and interpretation with sufficient detail to enable the reader to see how themes emerged from the data. The audit trail was systematic enough for another researcher to follow and assess my steps. Further, throughout the study, I kept a reflexive journal and recorded my thoughts, feelings, and perceptions to identify possible biases and assumptions.

Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the purpose and rationale for this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study, which was to explore the self-perceived leader efficacy levels of veteran principals who had recently experienced a transition. For this study, veteran principals were defined as principals with more than two years of experience who had transitioned to their current schools within the last four years. Further, I sought to

discover the leadership actions, professional learning, resources, and supports that principals believed are the most helpful when they transition to new schools. The design of this study included two steps: quantitative, followed by qualitative. I outlined a plan for collecting and analyzing the data in both steps. Furthermore, I presented detailed information on the participants, the instrumentation, ethical considerations, my positionality as a researcher, and issues of trustworthiness.

In Chapter 4, I document the specific results of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study for each research question. In Chapter 5, I will present the conclusion, discussion, and implications of my research, along with a description of the study's limitations and suggested areas for future research.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study was to explore the self-perceived leader efficacy levels of veteran principals who had recently experienced a transition. For this study, veteran principals were defined as principals with more than two years of experience who had transitioned to their current schools within the last four years. I also explored the leadership actions, professional learning, resources, and supports that the principals believed were the most helpful when they transitioned to their current schools. This chapter includes the findings from the following research questions:

1. What are the self-perceived leader efficacy levels of veteran principals who have recently experienced a school transition, according to the Leader Efficacy Questionnaire ([LEQ] Hannah & Avolio, 2013)?
2. How, and to what extent, do self-perceived leader efficacy levels vary based on (a) years of principal experience, (b) number of school transitions in a leadership capacity, and (c) the principal's desire for the leadership transition?
3. What professional learning opportunities, resources/supports, and leadership actions do veteran principals perceive as the most impactful to their leader efficacy development and successful transitions?

It was clear in my review of the literature that principals' efficacy beliefs influence their daily efforts and persistence at work and their resilience in dealing with challenges. Transitioning to another school can be especially challenging as incoming principals adapt to new school cultures. Determining the self-perceived efficacy levels of

principals who had recently experienced a transition provided a platform from which to further explore school transitions through open-ended questions in the survey and interviews. The principals in the study had made at least one school transition in the past four years. From one large urban school division in Alberta, 53 principals participated in the survey portion of the study and eight principals in the interview portion.

Demographic Information of Participants

The survey instrument collected demographic information from the respondents (Table 8). The demographics reveal that the majority of the participants had masters' degrees (51%) and primarily in the range of 6-10 years (41%) of experience as principals.

Table 8

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	Percent	Characteristic	<i>n</i>	Percent
Degree level			Years of experience		
Bachelor	20	37	1-5	12	23
Master	27	51	6-10	22	41
Doctorate	2	4	11-15	10	19
Other advanced	2	4	16+	7	13
No reply	2	4	No reply	2	4
Year of transition			Number of schools		
2021	20	38	2	22	41
2020	16	30	3	18	34
2019	11	21	4	4	8
2018	6	11	5+	7	13
			No reply	2	4

Note. *n* = 53

In general, most principals (68%) had transitioned to different schools in 2020 or 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic school restrictions. The majority of the principals (55%) had experienced more than one transition as a school principal.

Research Question 1: Perceived Leader Efficacy Levels

With the first research question, I sought to understand the self-perceived leader efficacy of veteran school principals who had recently experienced a school transition. The participants completed the LEQ (Hannah & Avolio, 2013), which consisted of 22 questions that explored three components of leader self-efficacy: leader action self-efficacy (LAE), leader means efficacy (LME), and leader self-regulation efficacy (LSRE). LAE measured the principals' perceived ability to execute various vital leader actions. LME measured their impression that they could rely on peers, staff, and senior leaders to strengthen their leadership. LSRE measured the principals' perceptions of their own ability and self-motivation to work through complex situations and generate effective solutions. Each question in the questionnaire asked the participants to rank their level of confidence on a scale from 1 (*not at all confident*) to 100 (*totally confident*). Table 9 shows the average of the combined overall score on the LEQ and the averages of the three separate constructs. The average overall score of 82.14 suggested that, generally, the participants approached the "totally confident" benchmark in terms of overall leader efficacy.

Table 9*Summary of Leader Efficacy Questionnaire Components*

Component	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Overall	82.14	7.04
LAE	81.97*	7.34
LME	76.44 *	13.85
LSRE	88.00*	6.30

Note. * $p < .05$

The frequency distribution in the LME component, which is leaders' perception that they can draw upon others in the workplace and leverage the organization's resources to enhance their leadership, reveals the highest standard deviation of the three components. Further investigation of this specific component showed the data skewed to the left, which indicates a negatively skewed distribution. The data for the LME were dispersed over a wider range of values than the other two components. A repeated measure ANOVA revealed differences across the three dimensions: $F(2,52) = 26.00$, $p < .001$. The average of LME was significantly lower than both LSRE and LAE. The highest average was in LSRE which shows the leaders' perceived ability to think through complex leadership situations and generate solutions as well as the ability to motivate self and others to enact those solutions. LAE, which is leaders' perception that they can effectively implement leadership actions to support the organization's goals, had the second highest average.

Following the analysis of the averages of the LEQ components, I conducted a test to measure the statistical relationship among these components. Table 10 displays the

Pearson correlation coefficients for the three components of the LEQ that I used to measure 53 principals' perceived efficacy in their leadership capabilities.

Table 10

Correlation Coefficients for LEQ Components for Experienced Principals

LEQ component	1.	2.	3.
1. Total leader action self-efficacy	-		
2. Total means efficacy	0.28*	-	
3. Total leader self-regulation efficacy	0.64**	0.27	-

Note. $N = 53$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

The statistical test revealed a moderate correlation between leader action and leader self-regulation ($r = .64$, $p < .01$), with the R^2 value at 40%, which demonstrates that as the value in leader action increased, so did the value in leader self-regulation. The correlation between leader action and leader means was weak, and leader self-regulation and leader means were not significantly correlated.

Research Question 2: Variables in Perceived Leader Efficacy Levels

With the second research question, I explored how and to what extent self-perceived leader efficacy levels vary based on (a) years of principal experience, (b) number of school transitions in a leadership capacity, and (c) the principal's desire for the leadership transition. The intention of this research question was to determine whether different variables impact leader efficacy levels, either positively or negatively. For example, an assumption could be that efficacy levels increase with principals' years of experience. To test this hypothesis, I performed statistical tests.

Table 11 compares the mean of the LEQ scores based on the years of principals' experience, the number of school transitions, and the principals' desire for the leadership transition. One-way ANOVA tests showed no statistically significant difference ($p > .05$) between the self-perceived leader efficacy levels and years of principals' experience, the number of school transitions in a leadership capacity, or the principals' desire for a leadership transition; however, the small sample sizes diminished the statistical power of these tests. Although I determined that there was no statistical significance, it is interesting to note that the mean of the overall LEQ increased with the years of experience in the first three categories.

Table 11*Comparison of Variables on LEQ Mean*

Variable	<i>n</i>	Overall	LAE	LME	LSRE
Years of experience					
1-5 years	12	80.60	79.75	75.76	86.29
6-10 years	22	82.90	83.62	76.62	88.46
11-15	10	83.78	84.65	78.51	88.16
16+	7	79.01	75.82	73.65	87.57
No reply	2	85.81	85.36	78.00	94.06
Number of transitions					
1	22	82.05	81.51	77.56	87.06
2	18	81.82	82.90	75.07	87.48
3	4	87.46	84.74	85.71	91.94
>4	7	79.18	78.51	70.67	88.36
No reply	2	85.81	85.36	78.00	94.06
Desirability of Transition					
Principal Requested	33	82.23	81.32	78.07	87.29
Different/Acceptable	5	77.73	78.31	67.86	87.03
Different/Unwelcomed	1	88.21	87.86	84.29	92.50
Division Requested/Acceptable	14	83.07	84.39	75.10	89.72
Division Requested/Unwelcomed	0				

*Note. N = 53***Research Question 3: What Works to Support Successful Transitions**

With the third research question, I sought to understand the professional learning opportunities, resources/supports, and leadership actions that veteran principals perceived as the most impactful on their leader efficacy development and successful transitions. For each professional learning category, I asked the participants to check all the opportunities that supported them during their transitions and also built their competence and

confidence as principals. In each category, they could check everything that applied in the subcategories; the subcategory n indicates how many reported having engaged in the different learning opportunities. All participants ($N = 53$) checked one or more subcategories in each of the categories. Table 12 shows how frequently the participants chose each subcategory.

Table 12*Professional Learning Opportunities*

Category	Frequency, <i>n</i> (%)
Subcategory	
Formal learning	
Conferences	17 (26)
Division professional learning sessions	26 (40)
Web-based training	5 (8)
Workshops	9 (14)
University	5 (8)
Other	3 (5)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • -Division Checklist 2x • -“No formal learning opportunities available for transitioning schools” 	
Experiential learning	
Hands-on experiences	47 (47)
Job shadowing	8 (8)
Projects	9 (9)
Trying things out	35 (35)
Coaching and mentoring	
Mentor/mentee	20 (48)
Connect with consultant	10 (24)
Coaching	10 (24)
Other	2 (5)
Assistant Superintendent Conversations	
Peer-to-peer learning	
Learning with/from peers	71 (38)
Book studies	13 (7)
Community of practice	16 (9)
Networks	40 (22)
Catchment	45 (24)

The participants selected subcategories in peer-to-peer learning ($n = 185$) and experiential learning ($n = 99$) the most frequently. Peer-to-peer learning involves connecting with colleagues in various ways and learning from peers was the most frequently chosen subcategory ($n = 71$). Experiential learning is learning while doing, and the participants chose the hands-on experiences subcategory the most often ($n = 47$).

After they identified all the opportunities that supported them, I asked the participants to rate how impactful each learning opportunity was on a scale of 1 (*least*) to 5 (*most*) in supporting them during their transition experience. Table 13 shows how impactful the participants perceived the various categories of professional learning were.

Table 13

Impact of Learning Opportunities

Category	<i>n</i> (%)				
	1 (<i>least</i>)	2	3	4	5 (<i>most</i>)
Formal learning	14 (29)	9 (19)	16 (33)	5 (10)	4 (8)
Experiential learning	1 (2)	1 (2)	5 (10)	21 (42)	22 (44)
Coaching & mentoring	5 (10)	7 (15)	13 (27)	15 (31)	8 (17)
Peer-to-peer learning	0	2 (4)	5 (10)	16 (31)	29 (56)

Again, peer-to-peer learning and experiential learning were prominent. 56% of the participants ($n = 52$) gave a rating of “most impactful” for peer-to-peer learning and 44% of the participants ($n = 50$) for experiential learning. Next, I performed a repeated measures ANOVA to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference among the professional learning categories relative to impact. Table 14 shows the average ratings of impact in each professional learning category.

Table 14*Summary of Impact Ratings for Professional Learning Categories*

Category	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
			39.07	< .001
Formal learning	2.50	1.26		
Experiential learning	4.24*	.87		
Coaching and mentoring	3.29	1.22		
Peer-to-peer learning	4.38*	.82		

Note. * $p < .001$

The repeated measure ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference among the perceived impacts of the various categories of professional learning, $F(3,2.42) = 39.07, p < .001$. The participants perceived experiential and peer-to-peer learning as more impactful than the other two categories. Although they rated coaching and mentoring less than experiential and peer-to-peer learning, they rated them higher than formal learning. Compared to formal learning, they perceived all other categories as more impactful.

Qualitative Analysis: What Made the Learning Opportunities Impactful?

Following the rating question, I asked the participants to respond to a short-answer question: “Thinking about the most impactful learning opportunities you identified above, please share your thoughts about why they were impactful to you.” For each participant’s statement, I identified initial code(s) to describe the data. Depending on the length and depth of the answer, statements were assigned one or more codes. In all, 90 first-cycle codes were identified. Next, I combined codes into common categories. Saldaña (2016) refers to this as “lumping and splitting the data” (p. 23). Table 15 displays

the categories that I identified from coding the data. The examples chosen for each category provide an overall representation of the data. The participants most frequently identified professional relationships as impactful—with peers, colleagues, current staff, and supervisors. They also frequently identified having a safe space to ask questions and work through issues.

Table 15*Explanation of Impact of Professional Learning*

Category	Examples	Frequency: <i>n</i> (%)
Previous experience	“I had a decade of previous experience as an AP in Jr High and taught for most of my career in a Junior High. My experience as an AP at a High School was also extremely helpful. The fact that I have been working, teaching and leading in this School Division for over 25 years was also valuable with connections to colleagues and support” (p. 22).	11 (12)
Larger context	“I find peer-to-peer learning to be most valuable through transitions as ... collaborative planning and problem-solving helps me determine focus and next steps” (p. 37). “School Faculty council allowed me to ask questions, brainstorm ideas, try new things and garner feedback based on old school culture, that allowed me to triangulate initiatives and set a new vision” (p. 27).	10 (11)
Innovation & experimentation	“The collaboration sparked some innovative ideas to support positive school culture” (p. 14). “Being able to try things out and learn from my mistakes was also helpful. I was very fortunate to be in a school community with supportive and understanding staff” (p. 45).	16 (18)
Relationships	“The most impactful learning opportunity for me was working with colleagues. Having been a principal for a number of years, I know the administrivia part of my work very well and it is similar regardless of the school you are at. What is different at a new school are the programs, culture and ways of doing things. All of those things are most quickly learned by developing working relationships with those that have relevant experience in the aforementioned areas” (p. 5).	29 (32)
Safe space	“The opportunity to seek advice and wisdom from others, be it through mentoring or peer-to-peer learning allowed me to seek answers to questions I had about my new school; the staff, students and parents” (p. 7). “With strong connections, I was able to put myself out there, be honest about issues and ask questions without feeling judged. It was a safe place to own mistakes and problem solve together” (p. 49).	24 (27)

It is clear that support systems through relationships and safe spaces were dominant concepts in the data with 59% of the participants sharing their perspectives of

the impact of professional learning within these two categories. It was surprising to note that previous experience was viewed as less impactful.

Success of Transition

Following the questions on learning opportunities and impact, I asked the survey participants to rate their transitions on a scale from 1 (*not successful*) to 10 (*very successful*). Table 16 displays the participants' ratings of the success of their school transitions. The average rating of the perceived success of the transition was 8 ($M = 8.23$, $SD = 1.25$). Only one participant rated the success as below 6 on the scale. Generally, the principals perceived their transitions as successful; 75% of the participants rated the transitions between 8 and 10 on the scale.

Table 16

Rating of Perceived Success of Transition

Rating	<i>n</i> (%)
1-3	0 (0)
4	1 (2)
5	0 (0)
6	3 (6)
7	9 (17)
8	15 (29)
9	17 (33)
10	7 (13)

Note. $n = 52$

My next task was to determine whether the participants' perceptions of the success of their transitions correlated to their overall LEQ. Thus, I conducted a test to measure the statistical relationship between overall LEQ and the perceived success of the

transition. I found a modest statistically significant correlation between overall LEQ and the successful transition ratings ($r = .328, p < .05$), with the R^2 value at 11%. In other words, overall LEQ explains about one-tenth of the variability in the transition ratings.

Qualitative Analysis: Success Rating Explained

I asked the participants to explain why they rated the success of their transitions as they did. For each participant's statement, I identified initial code(s) to describe the data. Depending on the length and depth of the answer, statements were assigned one or more codes. In all, 98 first-cycle codes were identified. Next, I combined codes into common categories. Table 17 displays the categories that emerged from the explanations of the ratings of the transitions. The examples chosen for each category provide an overall representation of the data.

The participants selected actively building connections at the school as the most frequent reason that they perceived their transitions as successful. Generally, those who identified external factors, excluding COVID, as having had an impact on their transitions also rated their transitions in the lower range (4-7) of the scale.

Table 17*Explanation of Transition Rating*

Category	Examples	Frequency, <i>n</i> (%)
Support from others (Outgoing principal 9x)	<p>“Felt very supported by central team, collegial support from principal colleagues, support from Sr Admin - lots of supports” (RP51).</p> <p>“I was assigned fairly early in the process and was able to work with the current principal to have a smooth transition” (RP40).</p>	19 (19)
Building connections at new school	<p>“Making a school a successful learning and teaching place for students and staff comes with building relationships and community while raising the bar for excellence” (RP50).</p> <p>“My focus in that first year ...was to establish meaningful connections, create strong communication structures and start building in processes that support us, both in processing the overwhelming amount of daily "stuff" all educators have to do, but also in opening doors to inspiration” (RP35).</p>	35 (36)
Skill set & experience	<p>“I felt I had a strong background and skill with the complexities and the requirements of the position” (RP23).</p> <p>“The transition was relatively smooth as I felt I had a good grasp on many things as I was a part of the community already” (RP36).</p>	29 (30)
External factors (COVID 12x)	<p>“Disappointed in the support of my Assistant Superintendent. I am not certain that he even understands how difficult this school is to operate in. I find that I follow 'rules and expectations' and yet I am not supported” (RP25).</p> <p>The transition was difficult given that COVID-19 was still in play. Additionally, full-time work through the summer months was necessary to meet Division deadlines and procedures. This made for a challenging first year. There is also "double duty" required leaving one school and starting the next depending on the conditions of each location” (RP14).</p>	23 (23)

Inductive Approach to Identify Themes

To further explore principals' perceptions of the professional learning opportunities, resources/supports, and leadership actions that were the most impactful on their leader efficacy development and successful transitions, I conducted eight semistructured interviews. I began with an inductive approach to find the dominant themes in the raw data without the constraints of preconceived ideas or findings from previous researchers (Thomas, 2006). To identify the themes, I engaged in first-cycle holistic coding and applied a single descriptive code to text segments in the interview transcripts. Next, I examined the first-cycle codes to identify patterns in the codes and decided on 13 categories (Appendix N) that I then condensed into three themes based on the connections among the identified categories. From my analysis of the data from the semistructured interviews, I identified three overarching themes. These themes were (a) self-leading, (b) leading others, and (c) balcony view. Table 18 displays the categories that I connected to establish the themes. In presenting the findings, I selected quotations that reflected a strong pattern in the data. As much as possible, I distributed the quotation selection across the eight participants to best represent the data set (Lingard, 2019).

Table 18*Themes and Connected Categories*

Themes	Categories
Self-leading	External support Manage operations Open and clear communication Take your time Walk your talk
Leading others	In service to others Invite experimentation Leverage staff Seek input Working together
The balcony view	Big picture Identify what matters Understand the past

The Theme of Self-Leading

The categories that connected to develop the theme of self-leading all include aspects of self that supported the principals in their development and during the school transition. In the interviews, principals explained that they worked to understand themselves in relation to their new schools and sought support when they needed it. They also spoke about allowing the staff to get to know them personally and professionally. The principals reported that they made constructive and mindful decisions as they moved through the transition period.

External Support. The majority of the comments on external support referred to people. The participants reported that they approached other school-division employees for support, including assistant superintendents; colleagues; division consultants; and, for

two participants, coaches. The principals noted that assistant superintendents provided information about the school and helped to set direction. Principal 7 stated:

I'd speak to the assistant superintendent who is leading that school, supervising that school, to find out if there was something specific that they were looking for that the school needs or why perhaps they felt I was a fit for that school, so I had some sort of perspective.

The other principals echoed this sentiment, although one did not consider the assistant superintendent helpful. Principal 8 reported:

I didn't leverage my assistant sup because they knew nothing about the building. I asked them. I said, "What would you like me to accomplish moving into this building? Where do you think are the gap areas?" And they didn't know. So that clearly told me that I would either have to rely on my other principal colleagues, the outgoing principal, or my past experiences.

The participants often mentioned having relied on other principal colleagues through personal connections, catchments, or networks. They noted that their colleagues were able to provide safe spaces to ask questions and grapple with the complexities of leadership. Principal 1 described the network of colleagues as a place where "all voices are heard, and it's really good. You feel safe to ask dumb questions." Principal 2 spoke about colleagues whom "I reached out to who I trusted that might have had a little more understanding of the bigger picture journey of my school." The coaches with whom two of the principals worked also provided safe spaces to work through leadership complexities. Coaches offered more hands-on and tangible support, according to

Principal 5: “She really helped me to frame change management in the buildings, to frame school planning, my vision, and my instructional leadership and work it into something that was workable for me.” Both principals who worked with coaches articulated how this support helped them grow their leadership skills.

The participants mentioned one item that did not involve support from people, which was a transition document. This school division distributed a document called “The Principal Transition Checklist,” which contains operational items that must be managed during a school transition. Half of the principals considered it helpful. As Principal 4 described it, “There is nothing in there that’s mind-blowingly brilliant, but it’s one of those things that you just—schools are complex machines, and so you forget about things.” Not all principals believed that the checklist was helpful. Principal 1 stated, “We got this sheet of all this operational stuff. . . . It’s useless. I don’t need more help with operations.” Principal 1 further explained that belonging to “a network of people who are at new schools” and having “some background around the school, . . . not this politically correct stuff” from the assistant superintendent would have been beneficial during the transition. Certainly, this external document provided by the division specifically for principals in transition, appeared to have some benefit to principals. However, support from colleagues was valued more.

Manage Operations. The principals stressed the need to attend to learning about and managing the school's operations. They identified intentional actions to ensure the smooth running of the school that included looking at school data, finding efficiencies by creating systems and using processes, and being present throughout the school.

When the principals were reassigned to different schools, they reported that one of their first steps was to review the school data. The school's budget, plan, and results review documents are available to all members of the public through the division's website. Principal 7 explained, "I think the first thing is to learn about the school once it's identified, and so I would try and glean what I could from the information."

When the principals were new to their schools, they were able to take a fresh perspective. Several participants spoke about noticing the schools' operating systems and finding ways to make things more effective and efficient. As Principal 3 stated, "I'm always trying to make it about being more efficient or being more effective or getting more bang for our buck, and teachers can see a win in that." To gain perspective, the principals spoke about intentionally connecting with the various stakeholders by staying out of their offices as much as possible. Principal 4 said, "I'm out and about a lot," and "I was constantly in the classrooms." Principal 1 explained that "being present, being outside meeting the parents, getting to know the children, going to classrooms regularly" supported the transition. Being out of their offices to actively gather information about how the school operates helped principals make better operational decisions.

Open and Clear Communication. During the interviews the participants often spoke about the need for open and clear communication. This category was the second most discussed of the 13 categories that I identified. The principals emphasized the benefits and importance of sharing information transparently and authentically. They also considered reciprocal communication essential and frequently mentioned the value of listening to staff.

The principals took deliberate actions to share their thinking, philosophical beliefs, expectations, and decision-making processes, predominantly through formal and informal conversations. Principal 2 captured the sentiment of many of the principals on the benefit of listening:

I am a listener. . . . It's not about me; it's about the needs of that community. . . . The faster I can learn about my people, figure out what matters to people, engage in some of that—some people would think it's a waste of time maybe to have some of the conversations [that] I spend a lot of time having at the beginning. But when you're transitioning and you want to build trust, . . . there's changes that need to happen, and you need to have people on board and have people committed and care about the work you're doing. . . . Investing in relationships . . . [is] everything, because you can understand the things that might be holding them back, the things that motivate them, and you're able to tap into those when you're having a conversation. You can pull it back to those things. And so transition for me is about the community I'm coming into and what I need to do to serve, and the only way for me to learn that is to ask and listen.

Principals explained how listening helped to establish and build positive relationships and this was seen as a vital component in an effective transition. The principals focused on listening as a way of developing an understanding of the staff they served.

Equally necessary for open communication was sharing about themselves.

Principal 2 noted, “My philosophical position, my way of viewing education, I was very upfront about that. . . . I was clear and open about what I believed and what I cared about

from the start.” Similarly, Principal 3 stated, “I’ve realized that part of a successful transition for . . . a new principal is to really share our vulnerabilities with people, just to share vulnerabilities and to share the things that you need to know about me.” The principals believed that the leadership action of allowing others to get to know them on a personal and professional level helped to establish trust and build mutual understanding.

Take Your Time. According to the participants, learning about the school operationally, takes time. Open and clear communication takes time. The principals stressed the need to take time to listen, observe, and learn. Learning everything about the school—about the stakeholders, the operations, the greater community—takes time. Principals expressed that to acquire robust, not simply surface, information, they needed to slow down and engage in an iterative process. This took dedicated time and space. As Principal 6 explained, “I am going to give them days, maybe even weeks sometimes. I will ask the questions and come back and talk about it, . . . be more thoughtful with stuff, and give them some space to think rather than just go, go.” Principal 7 also articulated the need to take time: “You can sort of nudge, and I’m a nudger. . . . Unless there’s something really not good for kids and not healthy for the teachers, . . . then we nudge our way, because I think that’s respectful.” Similarly, Principal 3 believed that “it’s not a race; it’s a marathon. . . . It doesn’t all have to change or look different overnight. And ironically, if you take your time, you will be afforded more at the end of it.” The principals spent a year intentionally seeking to understand the context of the school before they made any profound changes unless they were necessary.

Walk Your Talk. Several principals used the aphorism “walk the talk” as a quick way of stating that leaders’ actions need to match their words. The principals believed that when leaders say one thing and then do another, this might cause people to distrust them. They believed that this notion of congruence—when what they say and do is in harmony—was an invaluable consideration when they established themselves as new school principals. These principals purposefully worked to be congruent as leaders.

Principal 2 summarized congruence in this way:

I just knew that I needed to make sure that all of my actions reflected that what I was saying was important [and] needed to be reflected in everything. So I was very careful to make those connections for people if I didn't think it was obvious. . . . And that just provides you trust. . . . Everyone can *say* [emphasis added], “This is what matters to me. This is what I believe.” . . . But then . . . everyone sits back to see what the behaviour actually is, because, quite honestly, it's easy to say whatever you want. [If] a lot of behaviour doesn't match up, . . . that's what people are watching for.

Principals felt that being new to the school meant that staff were forming opinions about them both personally and professionally. By walking their talk, principals believed this helped to establish trust and effective relationships. According to the principals, authenticity and congruency in words and actions were pivotal factors in a successful transition.

The Theme of Leading Others

The categories that connect to develop the theme of leading others all include leadership actions to work through and with others. In the interviews the principals stressed the importance of building capacity throughout the organization by creating conditions for collaboration and risk taking. Equally relevant to them was developing cohesion throughout the organization by seeking input and leveraging people's strengths. All of the principals spoke at length about being in service to their school communities.

In Service to Others. Being in service to the community was the third most discussed of the 13 categories. The principals described themselves as division employees who would be in their current school positions for a finite time. They articulated the notion that there was a history before they arrived, and the story would continue after them. Therefore, their work was to serve the community while they were in the principal role in their current schools. Principal 4 explained it as follows:

But when you sit in this chair, you're more in tune with the idea that we are division employees and that our current working location is here, and that absolutely 100%, my role in our division is to do the best things for this [school].

To serve the community, the principals intentionally built relationships by showing care and appreciation, recognizing staff, and giving staff choice and voice. Principal 6 stated, "Each school I have transitioned to has had such unique situations to navigate, and the only common strategy I have employed at each one has been to build relationships and seek to understand." For Principal 8, it was essential for the staff to know, "I am here to learn about your hopes, your dreams, and what you would like of

me to support you getting there.” The principals consistently expressed their belief that a significant part of their leadership role was to give their time and energy to benefit all of the stakeholders in the school community without any expectation of accolades for themselves.

Invite Experimentation. Helping staff to see the possibilities was an important consideration during a school transition for these principals. They often helped the staff to see the possibilities by taking the leadership action of asking “What if?” questions. Principal 7 explained, “My style is asking the Steve Jobs question: ‘Wouldn't it be great if we could do that? What do you think? If we could, how would we do it? Would that be something?’” Another way that the principals invited experimentation was to encourage their staff to try something. Principal 3 reported, “The first year it was an invitation, just an invitation: ‘Who wants to try it? Let's do it. If you want to try it, let's try it. If you don't, that's okay.’” The principals understood that they needed to communicate with staff that trying things posed no risk. Principal 4 stated, “The other thing . . . is just communicating to staff that I'm okay with messy.” The principals explained that they worked to create conditions in their schools that made the staff willing to experiment in both curricular and extracurricular areas.

Leverage Staff. During the interviews all of the principals articulated the belief that school staff are vital to the organization's success. They purposefully looked for the staff's strengths that would contribute to the organization's success, which some considered “mining the gold.” Principal 7 described the leadership action:

You invite your colleagues in and you share ideas, and then you'll find out what they're willing to do, and then you mine that gold. And when they're feeling like, "Hey, that's good?" and it's coming from them and their colleagues, the sail is going up higher and higher; more wind, and wind is getting caught. All you have to do is just do your best to hold onto the rudder and make sure you keep checking the charts so you're not going in the wrong direction.

The principals also leveraged the high achievers on staff, to whom they referred as "high flyers" or "shiny stars" or those who have an "ear to the ground." Principal 8 explained:

These were the ear to the ground . . . people. They had already developed the relationships with staff and staff trusted them all quite a bit. So when I had an idea, . . . I would make sure that it would land with them first. Then I cleaned it up, [fleshed] it out based on the potential tension points that could be created if I brought this idea out in the way I had envisioned it from the get-go, and then I brought it to staff. So an idea of mine or a direction of mine was never a final decision; it was always brought to staff for input, for feedback.

In addition to finding and maximizing the strengths of the school staff, the principals spoke about leveraging the knowledge of assistant principals and the outgoing principal to gain an understanding of the school culture during the transition period. They considered assistant principals valuable because they could provide the history of the school but not necessarily the bigger picture. Principal 4 explained, "My . . . assistant

principal had been here for nine years or so, . . . quite a while, so he has that historical perspective, . . . but not the principal piece, not some of the bigger [picture].”

The principals considered the outgoing principal as someone who could share invaluable information as well as the broader vision of the school. Principal 5 stated, “The outgoing principal was very helpful, and he put together packages of information for me and shared lots of stuff and put a whole folder together that he shared with me, which was very helpful.” Principal 8 echoed this sentiment: “The previous principal was phenomenal in capturing everything on written documents. And so he had shared with me many of the frameworks.” However, not all the principals shared this view. Principal 1 stated:

I met with the former principal, but I wouldn't say that that was an action that supported. . . . I thought it would be successful, but I don't think it really helped. . . . It took me away from my previous school, and . . . I don't see that as any great benefit. Being present, being outside, meeting the parents, getting to know the children, you know, going to classrooms regularly, [that helped with the transition].

Principal 3 had a similar viewpoint. Although meeting with the outgoing principal was beneficial in some ways, it was not helpful when the outgoing principal shared his perspective of the staff members: “I realized very quickly how not valuable that was.” Although this principal “appreciated the time, in the end, it really didn't mean much because, until I had relationships with people, I just couldn't make those connections in my brain.” A year later, reflecting on what the outgoing principal had shared, Principal 3

realized, “I had different perspectives, which really shows me from that bigger picture lens that different people fit with different people for different reasons.” Truly getting to know staff members and their capabilities helped the principals to work with others in meaningful ways to achieve the organizational goals.

Seek Input. A strong belief of the principals was that they needed to put themselves in the place of a learner. As the new people on staff, the principals had limited knowledge of their schools. Therefore, they needed to ask questions and actively listen to the answers. Principal 6 explained:

I just want to listen to get an idea of where they see the school needs to go. And to me, it's my role as a leader to take all the information in, talk to staff, and then start to set some kind of direction for the school. So I did lots of listening in different contexts.

The principals intentionally used protocols, surveys, and one-on-one conversations to receive input from and give voice to their staff. As Principal 7 explained, it is necessary to create the conditions for the voices and ideas of staff to emerge:

You have to respect where people are and get them comfortable . . . sharing their voice and their perspectives. . . . I might have an idea, but that idea doesn't always necessarily come to fruition, because through those [conversations] there's better ideas where people say, “Oh, that's a good idea, but” And then you're in awe because, yeah, that is a [better idea]

The principals eschewed the notion of leaders working solo. They contended that seeking input made them richer leaders and better positioned to lead the organization.

Working Together. It was clear in the interviews the principals believed it is better to work together rather than in individual silos. The leadership action of developing a collective in which staff support each other, set the direction together, and move in the same direction was common among the principals. Principal 2, for example, emphasized how vital it is for staff to set the direction for the school:

What I realized early on is, I needed to engage people in owning some of the decisions, the collective decision in the school. . . . I want them to feel like our work is so important that we're going to put everything into it together, and we're going to support each other, because the work matters to us and we keep coming back to that.

Principal 6 took a similar stance: “I want staff to know that I am not there to roll out my agenda, but rather to work with them and support them as we define our next steps as a school community.” Principal 7 believed that “those goals are only achieved if we're unified. So one of the things I feel you need to have at a school is, you’ve got to find that unifying instructional piece that brings people together.” The principals believed that the school environment is more likely to thrive if staff work in collaboration.

The Theme of Balcony View

The categories included in the theme of balcony view involve leadership actions that connect the dots and recognize the relationships among ostensibly disparate areas. This theme also includes leadership actions to build on the past and anchor decisions in alignment with the organization’s values.

Big Picture. The principals considered themselves uniquely positioned to view the bigger picture of the organization. In fact, Principal 1 emphatically stated, “I’m the principal, and I see the big picture.” Furthermore, they articulated the need to help staff to connect to the broader scope of the organization. Principal 6 explained: “I’m going to share how our . . . work ties into the strategic plan so they see the bigger picture.

Principal 3 voiced the importance of intentionally describing the bigger picture to staff:

Sometimes, I had to explain [and show] I understand and I appreciate. . . . For the most part, when I'm able to say, “I appreciate what you're saying. This impacts you as a teacher in your classroom. But can you imagine, just for a minute—just come with me on my journey. . . . I have a lot of stakeholders that I'm trying to appease here. I have parent optics. I have student perception. I have division expectations. And so help me manage all of that in a way that's reasonable. . . . Can you look at it through my lens?”

Additionally, the principals considered connecting expectations and decisions to the organization's purpose an essential leadership action. Principal 2 explained:

[If you are] not tapped into the why of what you're doing, [then] it's so easy to get off course because we have so many . . . outside pressures pulling at us that we can get pulled off. And if we're not circling back, you could find yourself down a path that you never intended because of being reactionary or getting pressure from parents or even from the division, quite frankly. If we've decided this is important, how are we going to use the expectation of the division and some of those

messages to move the work forward instead of feeling like it's something separate?

Without staying attuned to the bigger picture, principals expressed that they could be taken off course and distracted by any number of situations that were not in alignment with the school's purpose. The principals understood the need to continually return to the big picture, the school vision, to lead the organization successfully. They focused on the leadership action of maintaining perspective even in the midst of daily demands.

Identify What Matters. Deeply understanding what the school staff and greater community value was a critical aspect of a successful transition for the principals. They needed to discover and understand what motivated the staff to engage in the work. Principal 5 stated, "You really have to learn about your people and their motivations, . . . get to know the people, because chances are, my assumptions could be wrong." Principal 4 intentionally gathered information from all stakeholders:

We've gone through a very deliberate process this year of asking the question, Why do we honor and what do we want to honor? What is it? . . . We've rejuvenated our values in the building. And so we went through a process where we accessed student, parent, and staff voice.

Principal 2 engaged in conversations with the staff to unearth their motivations, because "you can understand the things that might be holding them back, the things that motivate them, and you're able to tap into those when you're having conversations. You can pull it back to those things." From the principals' perspective, delving below the surface to identify what matters to stakeholders is a valuable endeavour.

Understand the Past. During the interviews the participants often spoke about the need to understand the history of the school. This category was the most discussed of the 13 categories I identified. The principals discussed the desire to understand the context and culture of the school. It was a commonly held view that school leaders need to build on what is working in the school. Principal 6 reported:

I feel like people really want to know that you have taken the time to honor and respect the work that has gone on before me. Clearly, if there are practices occurring that are improper, those would be addressed immediately. But I believe that leaders often jump on board and start going full steam ahead without even understanding the cargo they are carrying or the destination they are headed.

The principals articulated that, first, they needed to understand before they made any changes. Principal 5 explained that “understanding why things were done before I try to change things” was an important consideration. According to Principal 8, “The other thing I was considering in this transition was the history of the school, so I had enough wherewithal to make sure I was respecting the work that had been done [before me].” The principals recognized the importance of letting staff know that the work in which staff were engaging, prior to the principal’s arrival, would be considered and built upon. This required that the principals put themselves into a learner stance. Principal 6 stated:

Before you try to change, you want to get to know. And so many times as an outsider coming in, you wonder, Why did that principal do that? And then about after a month, you get it. You still might want to get rid of it, but you get it.

By being in a learner stance, the principals avoided leaping to judgements about their predecessor's decisions.

The principals also spoke about coming to a place of acceptance with operational decisions that they might have made differently. Principal 5 explained, "So I spent a lot of the first year just letting things happen the way that they [happened] . . . and figuring things out from there, . . . maintaining status quo, . . . unless it's direct safety or a major concern to start." Principal 4 articulated a common belief among the principals: "[I needed to] figure out what those really cherished things were in the building that needed to be maintained even if I didn't necessarily agree with them." The principals chose deliberate leadership action to give staff the confidence that they would hear their voices and acknowledge the past accomplishments. The history of the organization connected the current staff, and the principals emphasized how vital it is to understand that dynamic.

Deductive Approach for Research Question 3

After completing the inductive analysis of my data, I next engaged in deductive analysis to determine how the qualitative data from the third research question might align with prior assumptions and theories constructed by other researchers (Thomas, 2006).

Specifically, I applied the data from my research study to Bandura's social cognitive theory (1988), Schlossberg's (1981) transition model, and to research by Manderscheid and Harrower (2016).

Bandura's Theoretical Framework and Professional Learning

I applied Bandura's (1988) social cognitive theory to consider the principals' responses to their professional-learning experiences, specifically the concept of self-

efficacy. Bandura (1997) suggested four sources of self-efficacy beliefs: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states. Both vicarious experiences and verbal persuasion appeared in the participants' descriptions of the impact of professional learning. They seemed to articulate the benefit of vicarious experiences, when they learned how others might approach a situation and then integrated the learning into their own practices. For example, in describing the impact of peer-to-peer learning, Principal 9 reported, "I believe I learn best from others who are engaged in similar work. Learning from others' perspectives challenges my beliefs and motivates me to examine my practice." Principal 12 similarly described vicarious experiences:

Talking with peers is impactful because I am able to talk through situations, hear how others are dealing with similar and different situations, and apply the information. I can also assess how others in similar roles are dealing with situations.

Both principals learned from others and applied the learning to their unique situations. Bandura maintained that vicarious experiences are important sources of self-efficacy, and the principals in my study benefited from them.

Verbal persuasion, which involves receiving feedback or praise from a respected source, was apparent in the principals' responses. For example, Principal 30 stated:

The peer-to-peer learning, or collegial conversations, offered opportunities for me to ask questions that may seem silly or question my confidence if I was to ask my superiors. As well, when asking these questions or seeking understanding and

perspective from my peers, they already have an understanding of my style of leadership, so their responses are more meaningful and make more sense.

Principal 53 shared this view: “With strong connections I was able to put myself out there, be honest about issues, and ask questions without feeling judged. It was a safe place to own mistakes and problem-solve together.” Having a safe space with trusted colleagues where they could access feedback was important to the principals and likely helped to develop their self-efficacy through verbal persuasion.

Schlossberg’s Transition Model and Principals’ Perceptions of Transitions

Using a Likert scale, the participants rated the success of their transitions on a scale from 1 (*not successful*) to 10 (*very successful*). The average rating was 8 ($M = 8.23$, $SD = 1.25$), which indicates that the principals were approaching the transition descriptor of *very successful* on the scale. The scores ranged from 4 to 10 (see Table 16). I asked the principals to explain their transition ratings, and four themes emerged (see Table 17) that connect to Schlossberg’s (1981) transition model. Schlossberg posited that transitions have unique challenges that require coping. To assist people with transitions, Schlossberg developed a model to identify potential resources or deficits that each person brings to a transition and grouped these features within the categories of situation, self, support, and strategies. I considered the principals’ perceptions of their transitions through Schlossberg’s transition model and found that many of their responses could fall within Schlossberg’s four categories (see Table 1, Chapter 2).

Situation. Schlossberg et al. (2011) believed that people need to consider their situation at the time of the transition and the degree of influence of several factors,

including trigger, timing, control, role change, previous similar experiences, concurrent stress, and assessment of the transition (i.e., positive, negative, or benign). Most principals (n = 36; 68%) had transitioned to their schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a third (n = 12) identified the pandemic as a factor that influenced the transition. They also identified other situational factors in addition to the pandemic. For example, Principal 1 explained:

The transition was difficult given that COVID-19 was still in play. Additionally, full-time work through the summer months was necessary to meet division deadlines and procedures. This made for a challenging first year. There is also “double duty” required, leaving one school and starting the next, depending on the conditions of each location.

Principal 1 referred to the impact of a change in roles, concurrent stress, and a negative assessment of the transition on the success rating. Principal 2 identified similar concerns:

It was very challenging as a result of moving from a central position after a number of years back into a school and considering the context of the pandemic and the uncertainty it created. With these two factors, my confidence was challenged, no question, and the transition felt quite overwhelming. More than expected.

Certainly, none of the principals had had previous experience with transitioning during a pandemic, and this situation added to the inherent challenges. Principal 6 also highlighted other challenges, along with COVID-19:

Given that there were three different principals at this school in three years, I walked into a unique culture of constant change and switching gears with each new leader. Staff often answered “I don’t know” when asking about a procedure or practice, which led to a lot of rebuilding. Transitioning during COVID restrictions also made things challenging.

Each of the principals highlighted above rated their transition below the mean and expressed strong feelings about their transition experience. It would seem that environmental factors influenced these principals’ affective states. As Bandura (1997) pointed out physiological and affective states are a source of self-efficacy. Emotional well-being can influence how people feel—positively or negatively—about their abilities in a particular situation. Generally, the principals below the mean of perceived self-efficacy felt troubled rather than energized by the environmental challenges. Bandura asserted that people with a high sense of efficacy are likelier to use their affective arousal as an energizer to facilitate performance. It is interesting to note that although 68% of the principals transitioned during COVID-19, two thirds of them did not mention the pandemic at all in their explanations, possibly because of an affective state that motivated them and personal assets that supported their transitions.

Self. Schlossberg et al. (2011) emphasized that each person brings different assets to a transition and categorized aspects of self into their personal/demographic characteristics (e.g., socioeconomic status, gender, age, life stage, and health) and psychological resources (e.g., ego development, optimism, self-efficacy, commitments, and values). The participants in my study did not highlight personal or demographic

characteristics; however, they often mentioned psychological resources. For example,

Principal 17 stated:

My goal was to focus on relationships, and I was able to do that even though it was in the middle of COVID. Upon reflection at the end of the year, I was able to hold true to myself and was confident that the decisions I made were in the best interest of kids, staff, and families.

Principal 17's statement demonstrates self-efficacy, commitment, and values.

Principal 25 described similar assets:

I felt confident as a leader, and I was comfortable and willing to hold space for staff when they were [facing challenges]. I reached out for additional support for staff and students, and I focused on building relationships with staff.

Principal 53 highlighted strengths that explained the successful transition:

Everything went better than I ever imagined. I would say it is a strength of mine to successfully transition into new buildings (I have done this more than once), maintaining systems that worked, building trust, and trying improved systems and strategies. Making a school a successful learning and teaching place for students and staff comes with building relationships and community while raising the bar for excellence.

The personal assets of the participants in my study likely influenced their persistence and resilience, even during COVID-19. It also seems likely that the principals' personal factors helped them succeed even in the face of challenges. As Bandura (1988) maintained, competency not only requires skills but also "self-belief in

one's capability to use those skills well" (p. 276). These principals appear to have strong beliefs in self which might have helped them to cope with their transitions.

Support. Different types of support include intimate relationships, family units, networks of friends, and the institution and/or communities to which people belong (Schlossberg et al., 2011). The participants in my study reported that they could rely on trusted friends/colleagues and community support groups for help during their transitions. For instance, Principal 10 explained, "The outgoing principal was organized and informative. My peer-to-peer network of principals are diverse in their work environments, which helped with my transition questions and decisions." Similarly, Principal 51 identified several supports: "[I] felt very supported by central team, collegial support from principal colleagues, support from senior admin—lots of supports."

Principal 34's source of support was time received for the transition:

The transition began early at the end of April, so I had a significant amount of time to transition with the outgoing principal. This allowed me to have in-depth conversations on multiple fronts of the school operation, including staff hiring for the upcoming school year as well as understanding the work that have been done in previous years and the school history, setting me up for success for the upcoming school year.

This environmental factor of support likely influenced these principals' self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1988).

Although Schlossberg et al. (2011) maintained that social support can be the key to handling the stress of a transition, a lack of support can make the transition more

difficult. Several participants in my study identified a lack of support. Principal 12 stated, “The outgoing principal could have put more detail into documents and greater work into organizing information that is useful in transitions.” Principal 18 echoed this sentiment: “There were a few situations that I wish I had been provided with information about before transitioning into the school so that I could have been better prepared.” Some principals described being on their own. For example, Principal 6, who had made several transitions within the school division, noted:

I’ve gone through lots of superintendents and all that stuff, so there hasn’t been a process. I remember very early in my transitions that ‘you do you.’ You have to get in there and put on your big [boy/girl] pants and do your job. I have never had a conversation with an assistant superintendent like, “Hey, is there anything else you need?” I have never had that conversation. I am not being critical of any of them, but it is just the way it has been. “Here is your school. Here is your budget. Here’s your stuff. Here’s your keys. Goodbye.”

Principal 5 also felt “we’re very much on our own as principals” and suggested that having an assigned mentor in the catchment would be valuable so that they would not “feel stupid going to people and asking simple Joe questions.” For Principal 1, having a network of principals serving similar grades or a network for principals in their first year of a school transition would have been helpful.

It was clear in my study that principals want support from higher leaders. For example, three of the principals whom I interviewed ($n = 38\%$) expressed a desire for

their assistant superintendents to explain why they chose them as the principals for their particular schools. Principal 3 stated:

You want to believe you get chosen to be in a certain school for a reason. And why am I here? Is it because of the systems I've established? Is it because of my relationship-building skills? Is it because of my ability to work with . . . ? Or am I weak in this area, so you didn't put me in that school?

Similarly, Principal 5 wondered, "If there was something specific that they [the school division administrators] were looking [for] that the school needs or why perhaps they felt I was a fit for that school. So I had some sort of perspective." Out of the four potential resources identified in Schlossberg's Transition Model, support, or lack thereof, was discussed more frequently than the other resources.

Strategies. Strategies refer to methods an individual might use to cope with a transition. Schlossberg et al. (2011) asserted that effective coping involves using various strategies, depending on the situation. The authors identified four coping modes: information seeking, direct action, inhibition of action, and intrapsychic behavior (the mindset of individuals in resolving problems). The principals in my study alluded to coping strategies in their responses. Principal 20, for example, described taking direct action and having a growth mindset: "I was able to make the transition, build relationships, and accomplish some movement of staff practice and culture building despite the context [of the pandemic]." Similarly, Principal 35 explained:

My focus in that first year and extending into this one was to establish meaningful connections, create strong communication structures, and start building in

processes that support us, both in processing the overwhelming amount of daily “stuff” all educators have to do, but also in opening doors to inspiration.

Bandura (1988) maintained that individuals who believe they can cope with challenging tasks or situations will put in a stronger effort to master the challenge. Many principals in this study articulated strong perseverance when faced with challenges.

Manderscheid and Harrower’s Research and Leader Transitions

The findings from my study’s interview data primarily support and extend Manderscheid and Harrower’s (2016) research. These researchers collected data through semistructured interviews with leaders ($N = 10$) who had transitioned into new leadership roles over the past 12–18 months. Manderscheid and Harrower’s research findings reveal five primary ways in which leaders can manage transitions: collaborating, learning, developing talent, self-reflecting, and making decisions. In my research study the themes of self-leading, leading others, and balcony view emerged in response to the question on successfully navigating transitions. Although Manderscheid and Harrower and I categorized the findings differently, many concepts overlap. Next, I compare the studies by referring to their categories.

Collaborating

Manderscheid and Harrower (2016) identified listening, communicating, seeking to understand, and asking questions as critical skills for collaboration. The participants in my research study mentioned every one of these skills. The principals whom I interviewed affirmed that open and clear communication, which encompasses listening and communicating authentically and transparently, is vital during a transition.

Furthermore, understanding the past, identifying what matters, and seeking input by asking questions were other leadership actions that the principals identified.

In both Manderscheid and Harrower's (2016) and my study, the participants expressed the idea of being in service to their staff and organizations above themselves. Hesbol (2019) maintained that higher principal self-efficacy can be associated with a collaborative school culture and shared vision. Although Manderscheid and Harrower did not consider leaders' efficacy, my findings show high levels of leader efficacy, which might explain why collaboration was a key theme.

Learning

The leaders in Manderscheid and Harrower's (2016) and my study recognized the need to learn about the organization's history and to continue to grow as leaders themselves as they guided their organizations. The leaders also recognized that they needed to build on what was working in their organizations rather than starting from the beginning. A common thread in both studies was that leaders intentionally put themselves into the stance of learners as a way of understanding the organization and adapting their leadership skills to their new contexts.

Developing Talent

Manderscheid and Harrower (2016) described developing talent as delegating tasks, building relationships, and trusting in others' capabilities. The leaders identified "high-potential" (p. 403) people on their staff. Similarly, the principals in my study articulated the importance of finding and maximizing the strengths of the school staff.

They strongly believed that building relationships and trusting in staff's capabilities achieve organizational goals.

The leaders in my study extended the notion of developing talent by explaining that they strived to create a supportive environment in which their staff could feel comfortable with taking risks and experimenting with something new. These principals wanted to encourage innovative practices in their schools to ensure excellent teaching and learning.

Self-Reflecting

The leaders in Manderscheid and Harrower's (2016) study described having a sense of personal mission, with written statements that guided their practice. They described their leadership practices as being in alignment with their values. Comparably, the leaders in my study spoke about having a philosophical stance. Sharing their values openly and transparently was critical. They did not mention using written statements to guide their practice. However, like their counterparts in Manderscheid and Harrower's study, these principals engaged in ongoing reflection to see the "big picture" and their place in it. This resulted in awareness of self and the organization, which helped to clarify the next steps.

Not mentioned in Manderscheid and Harrower's (2016) study is the notion of congruence, which would fit into their category of self-reflection. The leaders in my study emphasized that their actions needed to match their words. If they said one thing

and did another, people might distrust them. To establish credibility, the leaders believed that they needed to “walk the talk.”

Making Decisions

The leaders in Manderscheid and Harrower’s (2016) and my study stressed the importance of taking time before they took action. Many described taking a year to build relationships and credibility as leaders before they made any big changes. In both studies, the leaders believed that fast change is not the way to go in transition. Fullan (2020) also agreed with the need to move slowly, because, if leaders move too fast, they might miss critical learning and context that will benefit their effectiveness as leaders.

Conclusion

In summary, the findings of this chapter are the results of my investigation of the perceptions of veteran school principals who had recently experienced school transitions. In the surveys the principals reported their self-perceived leader efficacy levels and the professional learning, resources, and supports that helped them during their transitions. In the interviews, I further explored their leadership actions and supports during their transitions to their current schools. Overall, the principals who participated in this study perceived themselves as highly efficacious: The average LEQ score was 82 out of 100. The strongest component of the LEQ was LSRE ($n = 88$), which measured the principals’ perceptions of their ability and self-motivation to work through complex situations and generate effective solutions. The results show no statistically significant difference between self-perceived leader efficacy levels and years of principal experience, the number of school transitions in the leadership capacity, or the principals’ desire for the

leadership transition. The most impactful learning opportunities for these principals were peer-to-peer learning and experiential learning. In explaining why, more than a third of the participants described their relationships with colleagues as the most valuable. The principals perceived their transitions as successful. The average rating was 8 out of 10. More than a third of the principals attributed this success to having built connections at their new schools. Three themes emerged in the interviews that describe the leadership actions and resources/supports that these principals perceived as the most impactful on their leader efficacy development and successful transitions: (a) self-leading, (b) leading others, and (c) the balcony view. In Chapter 5, I present the conclusion, discussion, and implications of my research, along with a description of the study's limitations and suggested areas for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter, I present a summary of the study and the conclusions that I drew from the data that I presented in Chapter 4. The discussion will flow generally in the order of the research questions. Additionally, I comment on the implications of school principals' transitions, make recommendations for principals and school divisions, and make suggestions for future research.

Overview of the Study

In this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study, I explored the self-perceived leader efficacy levels of veteran principals who had recently experienced a transition. I defined veteran principals as principals with more than two years of experience who had transitioned to their current schools within the last four years. I also explored the leadership actions, professional learning, resources, and supports that the principals believed were the most helpful in their transitions to other schools. I grounded the study in Bandura's (1988) social cognitive theory and Schlossberg's (1981) transition model.

Research has demonstrated that leadership is integral to students' success and achievement (Branch et al., 2013; Edmonds, 1979; Grissom et al., 2021; Leithwood et al., 2004; Louis et al., 2010). In two oft-cited earlier studies for the Wallace Foundation, Leithwood et al. (2004) and Louis et al. (2010) asserted that leadership is second only to classroom instruction of all school-related factors that contribute to student learning. Furthermore, in a more recent and rigorous review of the research for the Wallace Foundation, Grissom et al. (2021) concluded that the earlier statements about school leadership are relevant and that a magnitude and scope of principals' effects impact

student and staff outcomes. Grissom et al. found that “it is difficult to envision an investment with a higher ceiling on its potential return than a successful effort to improve principal leadership” (p. 43).

As Grissom et al. emphasized, “Principals *really* matter” (Grissom et al., 2021, p. 43). With this understanding, I wanted to explore a potentially demanding time in a principal’s journey—school transition. Principals are moved from one school to another because of retirements, resignations, or school divisions’ rotation policies. My literature review showed that a transition can be challenging for both the principal and the school community (Bartanen et al., 2019; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Pietsch et al., 2020). The main drawbacks for principals who transition into different schools are that they have little to no knowledge of the new school, its culture, and its staff and no established relationships (Steele, 2015; Weinstein et al., 2009), which presents unique challenges that they need to address (Anderson et al., 2011). As Manderscheid and Harrower (2016) succinctly stated, “At no time during their career are leaders more vulnerable to failure as when they are in transition” (p. 390). A major challenge for principal turnover is its impact on students’ achievement. Data from several research studies have shown the negative impact of principal turnover on students’ achievement (Bartanen et al., 2019; Mascall & Leithwood, 2010; Miller, 2013; Pietsch et al., 2020). Thus, the main objective of my research study was to investigate what principals believed was the most helpful to ensure a successful transition.

In my research study, I also explored the self-efficacy beliefs of school principals. The data from several research studies on self-efficacy have demonstrated that leaders’

efficacy beliefs influence their efforts, persistence, resilience in the face of obstacles, goal achievement, engagement, self-motivation, and ability to motivate others (Bandura, 2009; Dwyer, 2019; Hesbol, 2019; Skaalvik, 2020; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004).

Evidently, high self-efficacy in principals can lead to positive outcomes for the school community. Therefore, exploring the self-perceived leader efficacy levels of school principals, especially during challenging times such as transitions, was important.

Discussion of Survey Data Findings

I collected data for my research study from a survey instrument, which consisted of the LEQ (Hannah & Avolio, 2013) and a demographic/professional learning questionnaire. The LEQ had 22 questions, and the demographic/professional learning survey consisted of 12 questions with a mix of multiple-choice questions, checkboxes, Likert-scale questions, and open-ended questions (see Table 5, Chapter 3). 53 principals from a large urban school division in Alberta participated in the survey. I used descriptives, frequencies, correlations, and ANOVAs to analyze the quantitative data. The following information describes the relationship between my study, the literature, and prior research.

Principals' Perceived Leader-Efficacy Levels

The first research question asked the participants what might be the self-perceived leader efficacy levels of veteran principals who had recently experienced a school transition, according to the LEQ (Hannah & Avolio, 2013). Hannah et al. (2008) defined leader efficacy as “a specific form of efficacy associated with the level of confidence in

the knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with leading others” (p. 669). Generally, the principals in my study had high levels of leader efficacy.

Overall LEQ and Subscales

In terms of the overall perceived leader efficacy levels of the participants in this study ($N = 53$), the result was $M = 82.14$, $SD = 7.04$. This indicates that these principals were approaching the descriptor of “totally confident,” which was benchmarked as a score of 100 on the Likert scale. I found similar results on two of the three subscales in the LEQ. The result for Leader Action Self-Efficacy, which measured the principals’ perceived ability to execute various vital leader actions, was $M = 81.97$, $SD = 7.34$. Leader Self-Regulation Efficacy, which measured the principals’ perceptions of their ability and self-motivation to work through complex situations and generate effective solutions, had the highest average, $M = 88.00$, $SD = 6.30$. The remaining subscale, Leader Means Efficacy, which measured the principals’ impression that they could rely on peers, senior leaders, and organizational structures to strengthen their leadership, had a significantly lower average and the largest standard deviation, $M = 76.44$, $SD = 13.85$. The lowest average in the subscales for Leader Means Efficacy was in keeping with the results in other studies (Hannah et al., 2012; Moran et al., 2021)

Leader Means Efficacy

According to Hannah et al. (2012), *leader means efficacy* reflects the leader’s belief in the usefulness of external supports and resources to enhance leadership performance. The means can be supervisors, colleagues, and organizational structures, to name a few. Further, it is not just the availability of means, but leaders’ belief in what

they can do with those means to amplify leadership performance that is important (Hannah et al., 2012).

The principals in my study had stronger self-efficacy beliefs than belief in the reliance of external supports such as senior leaders and organizational structures, which is referred to as leader means efficacy by Hannah and co-researchers. It is interesting to note that, of all of the questions in LEQ, the lowest scores were in the Leader Means Efficacy portion and were related to the principals' superiors, with $M = 65.43$, $SD = 24.49$ in relation to "I can go to my superiors for advice to develop my leadership" and $M = 61.81$, $SD = 23.24$ for "I can rely on my leaders to come up with ways to stimulate my creativity." Conversely, the highest score in Leader Means Efficacy, and the second highest score of all of the questions, was related to the participants' peers, with $M = 90.32$, $SD = 11$ for "I can rely on my peers to help solve problems." They also highlighted peers later in the professional learning questionnaire. When I asked the principals to choose opportunities that supported them during their transitions and built their competence and confidence, the participants perceived peer-to-peer learning as the most impactful (see Table 13, Chapter 4). Principal 24 explained, "The most impactful experience for transitioning was through various networks where I could feel safe in asking any question or talking through a complex issue or problem." Leithwood and Azah (2016) supported this belief in the power of networks and noted that leadership networks build the capacity of leaders when they dialogue on similar leadership challenges.

As Hannah et al. (2012) pointed out, leadership is a collective process that networks and social systems often support. Certainly in this research study, the principals perceived that their peers enhanced their leadership capability. Overall, the principals did not perceive that their higher-level leaders could do the same.

Variables in Perceived Leader Efficacy Levels

The second research question asked the participants what the LEQ results might be across three variables: years of principal's experience, number of school transitions in a leadership capacity, and the principal's desire for the leadership transition (see Table 11, Chapter 4). There was no statistically significant difference between the self-perceived leader efficacy levels and any of the variables; however, I found some interesting patterns.

LEQ by Principal's Years of Experience

Most of the participants in the study had between 6 and 10 years of experience as a principal ($n = 22$; 43%). Twelve principals had 1-5 years of experience (23%), 10 principals had 11-15 years (20%), and seven had 16+ years (13%). As might be expected, a comparison of the overall LEQ mean showed an increase commensurate with years of experience, with the exception of principals with 16+ years. This group had the lowest overall LEQ mean ($M = 79.01$, $SD = 6.21$). The small sample size of this cohort ($n = 7$) might have diminished the statistical power of the tests. I also found some very low scores from one participant with 16+ years of experience in the Leader Means Efficacy portion, who had scores of 12 and below (out of 100) in relation to three questions about relying on the organization and superiors for support. However, these results, although

they do not show a statistically significant difference between the overall LEQ and years of experience, indicate higher overall self-efficacy for principals with more experience, with the exception that I noted above. These results align with those in other studies where prior leadership experience predicted leader self-efficacy (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; McCormick et al., 2002).

LEQ by Number of Transitions

Most of the principals in my study had experienced one school transition ($n = 22$; 43%). 18 principals (35%) had made two school transitions, four (7%) had made three transitions, and seven (14%) had made more than four transitions. I found no statistically significant difference between the self-perceived leader efficacy levels and the number of school transitions or any discernible pattern in the data. Unlike the years of experience, the number of school transitions that the principals experienced did not necessarily result in increased LEQ levels. This was a surprising finding because I presumed that more transition experiences might result in higher levels of self-efficacy because leaders can learn and grow from past experiences. However, what I did not know in my study was whether their past transition experiences were positive or negative. Bandura (1997) maintained that mastery experiences are a source of self-efficacy development, but an unsuccessful experience can lower self-efficacy, whereas a successful one can increase it.

LEQ by the Principal's Desire for the Leadership Transition

Most of the principals in my study transferred to the schools that they had requested ($n = 33$; 65%), which is in alignment with the school division's rotation procedures. Only one principal in the study was placed in a different school than the one

requested, and the principal did not welcome the placement. However, the principal in this category showed the highest overall LEQ ($n = 88.21$) compared to the other categories. At least for this principal, being transferred to a school that was not requested or wanted did not appear to impact the overall LEQ scores. Again, I found no statistically significant difference between the self-perceived leader efficacy levels and the desirability of the transition or any discernible pattern in the data. The small sample size of participants ($N = 53$) might have diminished the statistical power of the tests.

What Supports Successful Transitions

The third research question asked which professional learning opportunities, resources/supports, and leadership actions veteran principals perceived as the most impactful on their leadership-efficacy development and successful transitions. I collected data from the quantitative and qualitative questions on the survey portion of the study (see Table 5, Chapter 3) and interviews (Appendix D).

Professional Learning Opportunities

Using a Likert scale, the participants ranked the impact of professional learning opportunities on a scale from 1 (*least*) to 5 (*most*). Of the four categories of professional learning (formal learning, experiential learning, coaching and mentoring, and peer-to-peer learning), the participants indicated that the most impactful professional learning opportunities were peer-to-peer ($M = 4.38$, $SD = .82$) and experiential learning ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .87$), which were statistically significant differences from coaching and mentoring ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.22$) and formal learning ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.26$). It was surprising that the participants did not perceive coaching as more impactful. However, perhaps because

a cost is associated with hiring coaches and school budgets are very tight, the principals might not have had the means in their budgets to hire coaches.

The data I collected show that the principals forged their own support systems primarily through established relationships and networks. This was a similar finding in Weinstein et al.'s (2009) earlier research study, in which principals reported few formal support structures, which necessitated creating their own. Previous researchers have highlighted the benefits of meaningful networks and mentor relationships to transitioning principals (Jensen, 2014; Ritchie, 2021; Steele, 2015; Weinstein et al., 2009) and suggested that leaders and school divisions nurture these support systems. The participants often mentioned support systems in the short-answer responses; 59% of the answers were related to those support systems (see Table 15, Chapter 4).

Implications for Supporting Successful Principal Transitions

In my study, I explored what veteran school principals identified as the most helpful leadership actions, professional learning, resources, and supports when they transitioned to new schools. Research has shown that transitions can be stressful because individuals need to adjust and adapt to a new context (Hallinger, 2011; Manderscheid & Harrower, 2016; Trombly, 2014; Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2002). Furthermore, several researchers have emphasized the importance of providing leaders in transition with robust support (Jensen, 2014; Ritchie, 2021; Schlossberg et al., 2011; Steele, 2015; Weinstein et al., 2009). In the literature, researchers have shown that efficacious leadership improves student outcomes (Branch et al., 2013; Grissom et al., 2021; Louis et al., 2010),

therefore, ensuring a smooth leadership transition will benefit the highest priority of school organizations: their students.

Support From Peers, Mentors, and Coaches

The findings in this and other research studies clearly show that peer support networks are essential components of support for principals. Similar to Weinstein et al.'s (2009) findings, the participants in this study reported that they had to create support systems for themselves. Given its importance, the creation of support systems should not be left completely up to the individual. As noted in the findings, several principals expressed feelings of being left on their own during the transition. Administrators in school divisions might want to consider how best to support principals in transition so that they do not feel that they are in the change alone. One way might be for the administrators to determine which networks principals might need and support the creation of these networks. For example, one principal whom I interviewed suggested that a network of principals from K to 9 schools or a network for principals in their first year of a school transition would be helpful. Certainly, principals can and have organized networks themselves, but support from higher leaders can only help. Along the same lines, one of the principals whom I interviewed suggested that having an assigned mentor in the catchment would be valuable. Peer support can ease the stress of the transition if principals have someone to approach with questions about the new catchment, and it can help newcomers not feel isolated. In Steele's (2015) multiple-case study of principal succession, the principals also reported the benefit of mentor relationships.

Additionally, Steele (2015) recommended that divisions create transparent and formal succession plans to support transitioning leaders. Perhaps school divisions could broaden their current succession planning from identifying and developing future principals to including transition plans for veteran school principals. As Jensen (2018) maintained, if school divisions want to avoid losing experienced principals, they must engage principals in meaningful network opportunities and provide one-to-one support. Jensen's study showed that peer networking builds leadership capacity and that one-to-one support through coaching and mentoring is beneficial. Several other researchers also highlighted coaching as a valuable support (e.g., Lackritz et al., 2019; Patti et al., 2012).

Support From Senior Leaders and the Organization

It is likely that principal supervisors (e.g., assistant superintendents) who intentionally engage with their direct reports as coaches and mentors can mitigate the feelings of isolation. Furthermore, if school divisions can find financial resources to provide interested principals with coaches, the outcomes might improve. Patti et al. (2012) reported several benefits of leaders' working with coaches, including improved performance, better conflict management, enhanced relationships, and more collaborative leadership strategies.

Leaders can influence the level of self-efficacy with their direct reports by practicing supportive leadership (Hannah et al., 2012). School division administrators might consider what supportive leadership could resemble in practice. It is likely that supportive leadership from higher leaders such as assistant superintendents would

influence Leader Means Efficacy. As I have already pointed out, the average on the Leader Means Efficacy subscale in this study, which is leaders' perception that they can draw upon senior leaders and leverage the organization's resources to enhance their leadership, was statistically significantly lower than the averages on both the Leader Self-regulation Efficacy and Leader Action Efficacy subscales, as the results of the responses to the LEQ demonstrate. As previously pointed out, it was clear in this study that principals want support from higher leaders. Senior leaders might consider the need to be transparent and clarify why they choose certain principals for certain schools. Transitioning principals would likely consider this supportive.

As Manderscheid (2008) showed, managing leadership transitions takes intentional actions. In his multiple-case study, the researcher studied the effectiveness of a leadership assimilation protocol, which senior leaders facilitated. It showed promising results for leaders in transition, such as improvements in their learning, adaptation, and relationship building within the organization. Senior leaders might consider using a promising practice such as the leadership assimilation protocol to support transitioning principals.

Senior leaders might also consider Schlossberg's (1981) transition model and Bandura's triadic reciprocal causation model. Schlossberg, a professor of counselling psychology, used the model to predict, measure, and adjust people's reactions to transition. This model could offer senior leaders a systematic framework to support principals through the transition process. Bandura's model can serve to remind senior

administrators how behavior, personal, and environmental factors interact with, and influence each other.

Other Factors that Support Transition Success

The principals interviewed for this study shared leadership actions that helped them to successfully manage their transitions. Many of the factors they identified were consistent with Manderscheid and Harrower's (2016) research. Critical skills such as listening, communicating, seeking to understand, and asking questions help to build a collaborative culture. Taking the stance of a learner to understand the school's history before determining how to best serve the community was viewed as essential. Building effective relationships with all the stakeholders and leveraging the staff's strengths was a core component. Another dominant concept was taking time before making decisions. Rushing to action was not seen as the best way to approach the new school. Principals who are in transition to another school would be well-served by reviewing the leadership actions that their peers believe supported successful transitions.

Self-Efficacy

The benefits of high levels of self-efficacy are well documented (Bandura, 2009; Dwyer, 2019; Hesbol, 2019; Skaalvik, 2020; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The 53 principals whom I surveyed for this study showed high levels of self-efficacy, and I have previously highlighted the factors that supported the development of their self-efficacy. It is important to mention that high self-efficacy can also have negative effects. Dwyer (2019) noted that overconfidence in leadership ability could lead to complacency and a

lack of motivation to develop leadership skills. Leaders with high self-efficacy might also have high expectations for their staff that might not be attainable. Although in my research study I asked leaders to rate their self-efficacy levels, I did not explore the impact of these levels on their followers. Additionally, even though the principals rated the success of their transitions, how their followers perceived the success of their transition was beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, it is important that principals and senior leaders reflect on the impact of principals' high self-efficacy on staff.

Limitations

Pointing out the limitations of a study and explaining the impact of these limitations on the results demonstrates rigor and enables researchers to identify a clear direction for future research. Including the limitations gives the reader a sense of the challenges that researchers face in their studies and suggests possible improvements for future research (Greener, 2018). The following paragraphs describe possible limitations that might be inherent to this study.

One possible limitation was the time at which I administered the survey. In the planning phase, I would have administered it with principals from August 22 to September 11, 2022. If the principals had access before the first operational day of the school year (August 30), this would have resulted in the least disruption to their start-up tasks. Although I submitted the research proposal to the division in July, the division's research team had some unforeseen staffing shortages, which resulted in a delay in finalizing participant lists for research projects. The division finalized the list of participants on October 4, 2022, and I first contacted possible participants on October 6,

2022. The first two months of the school year are perhaps the most demanding operationally, and the principals might not have been able to give the survey their full attention. It might also have diminished the number of principals who were willing to participate.

Another possible limitation was the survey instrument that I used in the first phase of the study. Because surveys are standardized and limited in length and depth of responses, it is difficult to gain a deeper understanding of the contextual factors. Although surveys are well suited to gathering participants' opinions and perceptions, self-reports are not always reliable (Muijs, 2012). The LEQ survey that I used in this study asked the participants to rate their confidence level. The results could have been biased if the school principals chose a socially desirable response, which is the tendency for participants to present a favorable image of themselves (Van de Mortel, 2008). Furthermore, I administered this survey to school principals in one urban school division, which therefore means that the findings might not be generalizable to principals in suburban or rural school divisions.

I administered the LEQ only to principals who had recently experienced a transition. What I do not know is how the LEQ scores might compare to leaders who had not recently experienced a school transition. The overall LEQ scores for all of the principals in the division would have served as a baseline for comparisons.

The LEQ survey instrument included an external rating form that asked the staff to think about the extent to which leaders show confidence when they lead. The 22 questions parallel the leader's questions. Because of time constraints, I did not administer

the external rating form to the principals' staffs, which therefore limited the ability to compare principals' self-rating scores with staffs' ratings of the level of leader efficacy that their principals displayed. Similarly, I asked the principals to rate the success of their transitions. However, I did not ask their staffs to do the same, which prevented a comparison of the results.

To mitigate the limitations of the survey's ability to access deep responses to the phenomenon that I was studying, in the second phase I conducted semistructured interviews. However, given the constraints of time and resources, I interviewed only eight participants. Therefore, the study's findings are limited to the experiences of the eight school principals and might not be representative of other principals' experiences.

Recommendations for Future Research

The goals of this study were to explore the self-perceived leader efficacy levels of veteran principals who had recently experienced a transition and to explore the leadership actions, professional learning, resources, and supports that the principals believed were the most helpful to their transitions to other schools. The following are some recommendations for future research related to this study.

One recommendation is to expand the limited scope of this study to all the principals in the school division to explore the relationships among the LEQ levels and selected variables. The small sample size of this study might have diminished the statistical power of the data-analysis tests. I also recommend expansion of the variables to include demographics such as age, gender, and cultural background. Additionally, an exploration of whether there are significant differences in the efficacy levels of principals

who have remained in their schools for over four years compared to those of principals with fewer years in a school would add to the literature on the impact on principals' turnover. It would also be interesting to add the external rating form to the LEQ survey to compare the results between leaders' and followers' perceptions.

Another recommendation is to include principals in suburban and rural school divisions in Alberta to identify the differences in leaders' self-efficacy and overall transition supports for principals. A question to explore is whether smaller school divisions can offer principals more support from senior leadership, given their size.

I am intrigued by Manderscheid's (2008) study on the leadership assimilation protocol to support leadership transitions. I therefore recommend further research to explore whether using this protocol to support principals would have the same positive impact on leadership transitions.

Finally, given the number of principals who expressed a lack of formal support from senior leadership, further research in this school division would be worthwhile to determine whether it is losing experienced principals because of the role's demands or their sense of isolation.

Conclusion

Improved principal leadership equates to improved student outcomes. Given this, schools require principals with the knowledge, skills, and attributes to lead well. Leaders must be willing to improve their leadership skills continually to meet the demands of their schools' unique and ever-changing contexts. There is no clearcut path to achieving

these outcomes, considering that school leadership is complex and often ambiguous. It will take an ongoing commitment to professional learning and a search for ways to meet the needs of the school's context. Learning leaders are critical to improving the quality of education within their schools.

With school leadership so vital, principals and division leaders must do their best to mitigate any negative impact of a change in school principal. Overall, the principals in this study were in service to their community and willing to grapple with the daily challenges in an effort to improve school outcomes. As Bandura (1997) pointed out, people who work through challenges successfully are able to develop higher levels of self-efficacy. Conversely, navigating challenges unsuccessfully can lower self-efficacy. According to Bandura, these mastery experiences are the most impactful on the development of self-efficacy because they are true indicators of abilities. Therefore, principals benefit from mastery experiences. It was abundantly clear in my research that they need support to do so.

Supporting school principals is central to school improvement. Principals might be more vulnerable to failure during a time of school transition. The stakes are high when we consider the impact of leadership on student outcomes. The success of our students relies on excellent and efficacious leadership. Ensuring students' success demands that principals and senior leaders be relentless in establishing robust and enriching support systems for school leaders.

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Appendix A: Permission from Mind Garden to Use Survey Instrument

For use by Camille Loken only. Received from Mind Garden, Inc. on April 10, 2022



www.mindgarden.com

To Whom It May Concern,

The above-named person has made a license purchase from Mind Garden, Inc. and has permission to administer the following copyrighted instrument up to that quantity purchased:

Leader Efficacy Questionnaire

The three sample items only from this instrument as specified below may be included in your thesis or dissertation. Any other use must receive prior written permission from Mind Garden. The entire instrument may not be included or reproduced at any time in any other published material. Please understand that disclosing more than we have authorized will compromise the integrity and value of the test.

Citation of the instrument must include the applicable copyright statement listed below.

Sample Items:

As a Leader I can...

- Energize my followers to achieve his/her best.
- Rely on my organization to provide the resources needed to be effective.
- Determine what leadership style is needed in each situation.

This leader displays a sense of confidence that he/she can...

- Energize his/her followers to achieve their best.
- Rely on the organization to provide the resources needed to be effective.
- Determine which leadership style is needed in each situation.

Copyright © 2013 by Sean T. Hannah and Bruce J. Avolio. All rights reserved in all media. Published by Mind Garden, Inc., www.mindgarden.com

Sincerely,

Robert Most
Mind Garden, Inc.
www.mindgarden.com

Appendix B: Approval for Remote Online Use of the Survey Instrument

Camille Loken

Conditions of Use

Question	Answer
I will administer this Mind Garden instrument for research purposes only.	I agree to this condition.
I will not send Mind Garden instruments in the text of an email or as a PDF file to survey participants.	I agree to this condition.
I will put the instrument copyright statement (from the footer of the license document; includes the copyright date, copyright holder, and publisher details) on every page containing questions/items from this instrument.	I agree to this condition.
I will send screenshots of my online survey to info@mindgarden.com so that Mind Garden can verify that the copyright statement appears.	I agree to this condition.
I will remove this online survey at the conclusion of my data collection and I will personally confirm that it cannot be accessed.	I agree to this condition.

I agree to abide by each of the conditions stated above

Your name (as electronic signature):
Date:

Camille Loken
May 27, 2022

Appendix C: Conditions for Altering the Survey Instrument

Camille Loken

Conditions of Use for Altering a Mind Garden Instrument

Before conducting your research:

1) You will register your intent to make an alteration of a Mind Garden instrument by describing the type of alteration(s), the details of the alteration(s), and the rationale behind the alteration(s). (You have fulfilled this condition. The information you provided is included below).

Instrument Name:

Leader Efficacy Questionnaire

Specific Alterations:

Change terms (e.g. "leader" to "orchestra leader")

Alteration Details:

Change "followers" to "Staff" Change "rewards and punishments" to "incentives and sanctions"

Reason for Alterations:

I intend to use this survey with school principals who engage in distributed leadership. Therefore, the term "followers" may be off putting. Also, "reward and punishment" are not commonly used in the educational field when thinking about staff.

2) You will assign all rights to the altered instrument to the copyright holder. (You agreed to this condition by electronically signing and submitting the form).

3) You will put the instrument copyright, including the notification that the instrument was altered, on every page containing question items from this instrument. Add the following text to the end of the copyright:

"Altered with permission of the publisher."

An example, using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, is shown below.

MLQ Copyright © 1995 Bruce Avolio and Bernard Bass. All rights reserved in all media. Published by Mind Garden, Inc., www.mindgarden.com Altered with permission of the publisher.

Appendix D: Interview Questions

1. What leadership actions and behaviours did you engage in to ensure success during the transition to your new school?
2. What resources and supports were most helpful when transitioning to your new school?
3. What, if any, were some of the barriers or challenges with your transition?
4. As you moved into the new school, in what ways did you manage polarities such as:
 - **Driving Change** (making things happen) and **Maintaining Status Quo** (the way things are)
 - **Tradition** (rely on old ways of doing things) and **Innovation** (when the situation seems to demand new innovative ways of doing)
 - **Action** (organizational goals) and **Reflection** (learn about the organization and self)
 - **Tasks** (getting things done) and **Relationship-building**

Appendix E: Institutional Review Board Approval**Memorandum**

To: Camille Loken
From: Nick McRee, Ph.D.
Date: 7/28/2022
RE: IRB Notification of University of Portland Project #2022089

Dear Camille Loken:

On behalf of the University of Portland's federally registered Institutional Review Board (IRB00006544), a member of the Board has reviewed your research proposal, titled "Experienced Principals and Leadership Transitions." The IRB concludes that the project satisfies all IRB-related issues involving human subjects research under the "Exempt" classification. A printout of this memorandum should serve as written authorization from IRB to proceed with your research.

Projects classified as exempt based on Title 45, Part 46.104 of the Code of Federal Regulations do not require further review by University of Portland's Institutional Review Board unless you modify some portion of your project. If the study is modified, you must submit a Continued Review Form (located on the IRB website) for continuing review before continuing with your project.

Please note that you are required to abide by all requirements as outlined by the Institutional Review Board.

A copy of this memorandum, along with your Request for Review and its documentation, will be stored in the IRB Committee files for three years from the completion of your project, as mandated by federal law. If you have any questions, please contact me at irb@up.edu.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick McRee".

Nick McRee, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board
Professor of Sociology

Appendix F: Division Approval Letter

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

August 31, 2022

Ms. Camille Loken
University of Portland
[Redacted]

Dear Ms. Loken:

Approved Research Project: Leadership Transitions and Self-Efficacy Development in Veteran School Principals

The above noted research project application has been approved, subject to the following conditions:


- Participation in the study is voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any time.
- Absence of informed consent will be interpreted as the absence of consent.
- Personal information may only be used for the stated purpose for which the information was collected or compiled.
- Anonymity of the participants and confidentiality of information obtained is assured.
- The research must be in compliance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

By acceptance of this letter, as the researcher, you will:

- Submit a final report to the Division and agree to dissemination of research results within Edmonton Public Schools.
- Comply with the conditions to conduct research in [Redacted]

As the researcher, it is your responsibility to provide a copy of the proposal and all related documents if requested. Please note that it is at the discretion of [Redacted] to rescind this approval at any time.

If you require further information, please contact [Redacted]
[Redacted]

Sincerely,

[Redacted]

Appendix G: Division Email to Participants

Date: Fri, Oct 7, 2022 at 1:13 PM

Subject: Approved Research: Leadership Transitions and Self-Efficacy Development in Veteran School Principals

To:

Good afternoon,

Please be advised that the above noted research project has received Division approval.

Camille Loken may now request your permission to make any necessary arrangements to proceed with this project. The approval letter is attached for your reference.

Please note that Division approval does not bind Division staff to participate in any research project and principals in < > have the final decision regarding involvement in research projects in their particular schools.

Appendix H: Researcher's First Email to Survey Participants

From: Camille Loken
Date: Thu, Oct 6, 2022 at 6:20 PM
Subject: helping with my research project
To:

Hello Name,

As you know, I have been approved by < > to conduct my doctoral research. I am very excited to take this next step and am hopeful you will be willing to help me with this research by responding to my survey.

For my research, I am deeply interested in finding out about principals' experiences when they transition to another school. You have been selected to participate in this study because you have transitioned to your current school within the last four years.

The survey will take you between 15 - 20 minutes to complete and has three sections. The first section of the survey is a series of questions about leader efficacy. You will be prompted to consider your level of confidence in different areas of leadership. Next, you will be asked questions about your transition experience. Finally, there are questions about your professional learning experiences that helped to support you during your transition.

Participating in this research will help system leaders better understand what professional learning experiences support optimal growth and enhance self-efficacy for principals. Further, it will help system leaders determine the factors that may support the likelihood of a smooth transition and mitigate any potential negative impact of principal turnover.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you would like to participate, please click on the link below. Please feel free to be candid as answers cannot be tracked back to you. I thank you in advance for your time and consideration. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

https://uportland.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2rUgIZB7cSqyUx8

Appendix I: Information and Consent Form for Survey Participation

This survey is part of a research study conducted by Camille Loken as part of the UNIVERSITY OF PORTLAND School of Education doctoral program. I hope to learn about leaders' perceptions of their own level of confidence in their capabilities and also which professional learning experiences are most impactful in developing competencies, especially during times of school transitions.

If you agree to participate, please complete the survey below. If you do not want to participate, please do not complete this survey. This is a confidential survey and there are no anticipated risks to your participation in this survey, however it is unlikely yet possible that a data breach could occur with the Qualtrics survey, and that the data may not be truly confidential. All data will be kept in a password protected computer and will be reported in the aggregate.

Participating in this research will help us better understand what professional learning experiences support optimal growth and enhance self-efficacy. Further, it will help us determine the factors that may support the likelihood of a smooth transition and mitigate the negative impact of principal turnover. However, we cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

Your participation is voluntary, and your decision whether to participate will not affect your relationship with Edmonton Public Schools. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me, Camille Loken, at 780-902-2733 and/or camille.loken@epsb.ca or my faculty advisor, Dr. Eric Anctil at anctil@up.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB (IRB@up.edu).

This research is non-evaluative. Please feel free to be candid as answers cannot be tracked to participants.

I agree to participate in the survey.

- Yes
 No

Appendix J: Researcher's Second Reminder Email to Participants

From: **Camille Loken**
Date: Sat, Oct 15, 2022 at 1:39 PM
Subject: a friendly reminder about my research
To:

Hello ^Name,

If you have already completed the survey, I thank you for your participation! And, please feel free to not read any further.

About a week ago, I sent you an email asking you to help with my doctoral research. You were selected to participate because you transitioned to your current school in the last four years.

I do know that October is a crazy, busy month for principals. However, if you would be willing to give between 15-20 minutes to complete the survey, I would appreciate it so much. ***The survey will be open until October 23, 2022 for you to complete.***

As I stated in the previous email, your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you would like to participate, please click on the link below. Please feel free to be candid as answers cannot be tracked back to you. I thank you in advance for your time and consideration. Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

https://uportland.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2rUgIZB7cSgyUx8

Appendix K: Researcher's Final Reminder Email To Survey Participants

From: Camille Loken
Date: Fri, Oct 21, 2022 at 3:41 PM
Subject: one final reminder about the survey
To:

Hello,

If you have already completed my survey - THANK YOU!

If not, here is one final reminder. The survey will be open until noon on Monday, October 24. Your thoughts about your transition experience will be valuable in advancing this research.

As you know, your participation is completely voluntary. If you do choose to help me out with the research, here is the link:

https://uportland.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2rUgIZB7cSqyUx8

Thank you!

Appendix L: Researcher's First Email To Interview Participants

From: Camille Loken
Date: Tue, Nov 15, 2022 at 10:50 AM
Subject: doctoral research interview invitation
To:

Hello ^Name,

Thank you for engaging in the first step of my research study by completing the survey. Thank you also for being willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

I invite you to participate in this next step by allowing me to interview you at your convenience sometime within the next four weeks (November 16 to December 12). The interview will take from 20-30 minutes and can be conducted by phone, through a Google meet, or in person at a location of your choosing. I will be interviewing you about your leadership experiences when you transitioned to your current school.

The attached document provides detailed information on the research. Please read the document over and, if you continue to be willing to be interviewed, sign to indicate your consent on the second page. You can return the signed consent to me as a scanned pdf via email or via internal truck mail in a sealed envelope marked "confidential" to Camille Loken at < > School. Please also keep a copy of the document for your own record.

Meanwhile, please email me to let me know if you are still interested in participating in an interview and if your preference for the interview is in-person, Google meet or by phone.

Thanks!

Camille

Appendix M: Information and Consent Form for Interview Participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Camille Loken as part of the UNIVERSITY OF PORTLAND School of Education doctoral program. I hope to learn about leadership efficacy development in school principals and school transitions. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have two or more years of principal experience and underwent a school transition within the last four years.

This form includes detailed information on the research to help you decide whether to participate. Please read it carefully and ask any questions you have before you agree to participate.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to engage in a short interview or a written response. The intent of the interview or written response will be to explore what resources and supports have been most impactful to you during your school transition. The interview takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. If you choose an in-person interview, we will meet at a location convenient to you. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed by me, the researcher. Following the interviews, you will receive my written transcripts and interview notes and can withdraw any or all data. You will have the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the data collected and provide any feedback. All data will be destroyed once the dissertation has been defended on March 23, 2023. Paper data will be shredded and digital data will be erased.

There are very few risks to participating in this research, however, you may feel uncomfortable talking about your experiences leading during a transition if these experiences were not positive. However, the results of this study are completely confidential and non-evaluative, so please feel free to be candid.

Participating in this research will help us better understand what professional learning experiences support optimal leadership growth and enhance self-efficacy. Further, it will help us determine the factors that may support the likelihood of a smooth transition and mitigate the negative impact of principal turnover. However, I cannot guarantee that you will personally benefit from this research.

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Transcripts of the interviews will be coded using descriptive coding to capture the themes or main ideas for each data section. Pseudonyms will be assigned to each participant. All data collected will be confidential and stored on a password-protected laptop. Any data that may reveal the identity of the interview participants will be omitted in the final report. Any information collected for this study, even if identifiers are removed, will not be used or distributed in future research studies.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision on whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with < > If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact me, Camille Loken, at 780-902-2733 and/or camille.loken@< >.ca or my faculty advisor, Dr. Eric Ancil at ancil@up.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB (IRB@up.edu). You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

I, _____, understand the implications of this research project and **agree** to participate in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix N: Second-Cycle Coding

Categories	First-cycle holistic codes	Number of codes
External support	Assistant superintendent; catchment; division supports; checklist; coach/mentor; colleagues; community connections; network	32
Manage operations	Connecting; data; efficiencies; focus on process; systems	18
Open and clear communication	Admit failure; build trust; communication; conversations; deal with emotions; expectations; introduce self; listen; meet with staff; model; non-negotiables; one on ones; open door; philosophical beliefs; provide information; repeat; space and time; vulnerabilities	46
Take your time	Build trust; feedback; get to know them; give/take/spend time; go slow; involve staff; learn about the people; not too fast; nudge; reflection; relationships; space and time	28
Walk your talk	Congruence; authentic; feedback	7
In service to others	About them; acceptance; appreciation; be open; build relationships; focus on positives; learner; no agenda; offer support; plant seeds; process emotions; put self out there; recognition; relationship building; serve the community; show up for people; show you care; staff choice; support them; you are the guest	42
Invite experimentation	Communicate; invitation; plant the seed; small changes; transparency; try; what if	12
Leverage staff	Administration/leadership team; assistant principal(s); conversations with resisters; go to people; mine the gold; outgoing principal; staff strengths	38
Seek input	Alignment; communication; difference in leadership; feedback; get input; give voice; invite opinions; listen; one on ones; open-ended questions; seek to understand; surveys; voice;	27
Working together	Build foundation; build trust; collaboration; collective; finding strengths; pull people together; mutually responsible; set direction; support what matters; unified; vision; watch it grow	18
Big picture	Alignment; ambiguity; balance; broad view; check-in; circle back; what's working; differences in leaders; division expectations; division plan; expect conflict; flexibility; independent decisions; pressure and support; purpose; set the direction; stay the course; temperature check; transparency; changes; my fit	27
Identify what matters	Ask questions; coach others; know your people; let it go; prioritize; provoke thought; purpose; seek to understand; shine a light; teach me; values; what matters; what you care about	19
Understand the past	Ask questions; assumptions; awareness; be a learner; build trust; celebrate past; culture; deeper than data; familiar; first understand; get a sense; honor the past; let it go; observe; one on ones; outgoing principal; use protocols; purpose; respect traditions; school council; school tour	52